

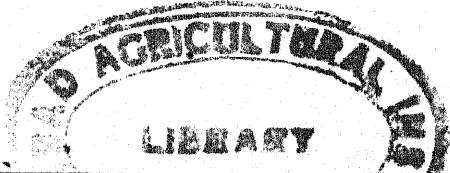


# THE PRINCESS

A CONDENSATION OF THE BOOK BY

GUNNAR MATSSON

*What could love and marriage  
have to do with a girl  
who had only weeks to live?*



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She was beautiful—tall, blue-eyed, blonde. To Gunnar Mattsson, a young Finnish writer, she was the Princess. She was in love with life, but she lived under a sentence of death. A victim of advanced Hodgkin's disease, she could never share the normal, happy lives of the other nurses at the Helsinki hospital where she worked.

Yet, as their love for one another grew, she and Mattsson found strength to defy the seemingly impossible odds against them. And when, after they were married, she learned she was expecting a baby, she refused the pain-relieving therapy the doctors had prescribed, for fear it might injure the child. As to whether she would live long enough for the baby to be born, and whether it would be sound and healthy if she did—the only thing to do was hope.

*The Princess* is a profoundly moving story of courage and the power of love. It will be read with awe and a certain pride as a testament to the unconquerable human spirit.

*"This book doesn't set out to explain a miracle.*

*I am a reporter, and my job is simply to*

*tell what happened."* GUNNAR MATSSON

WHEN I remember what I was like that autumn, I have to smile. I was twenty-six and had the world by the tail. My first novel, *Lapitip*—about a young widower taking care of two small children—had just been published and had become an overnight best seller. The critics called it "moving and funny." Letters poured in from female readers who refused to believe that the story was fictitious, and wanted to marry me and look after my poor children.

Besides this, I had a good job as a reporter on Helsinki's leading newspaper. All I needed to make life perfect was the right girl—someone who liked what I liked: fairy tales, sauna baths, comfortable old things, and of course me, Gunnar Mattsson. Naturally, she'd be pretty and healthy, my mother would approve of her, and we'd get married and have a houseful of children.

So, that autumn, I went to a college dance and there I met the girl this story is about.

The evening was half over before I saw anyone I wanted to dance with. Then, as the orchestra struck up a waltz, I noticed a tall, fair girl sitting against the wall. I went across to her. "Have you met any princes this evening?" I asked.

"No." Her lips closed quickly on the word.

Playing hard to get, I thought. As we danced, I turned on my most irresistible smile, but she only retreated further into herself. Her body was stiff, unyielding, and her feet seemed to drag after mine with effort.

I'll tell her a fairy tale, I thought. She wasn't much of a dancing partner, but I wanted to impress her just the same.

"Once upon a time," I began, "there was a princess who was forbidden to dance. . . ." She gave me a quick, impersonal smile. ". . . Then a fairy appeared and told the princess she could have three wishes. . . ."

Suddenly the girl doubled up, mumbled something, and ran for the door. I rushed after her. She said she was going to be sick, and plunged into the ladies' room.

"I'm sorry," she said when she came out. Something in her look made me uneasy. I felt I'd better see her back to her dormitory.

"Tell me the rest of your fairy tale," she said as we walked out into the night.

Reluctantly, I continued the story. By the time I was finished we had reached her building. It was the nurses' dormitory—she had just completed her nurse's training.

"I'm sorry I was sick," she said. "I'm not very well."

"That's all right, Princess," I replied. But I was glad when the door closed behind her. The last thing I wanted was to be mixed up with a girl who got sick in the middle of a dance floor, who had troubled lines on her face, and who showed no interest in that famous author, Gunnar Mattsson.

I half-ran back to the dance, to the brightly lit world of healthy, cheerful people.

UPSTAIRS in her room, the Princess slumped down on her bed. She was glad to be alone, for she felt a fresh wave of nausea creeping over her. Maybe it would come to nothing; maybe if she lay still it would go away. . . .

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She had wanted so much to go to the dance, to forget her cares, or pretend to. While dressing that evening, she had felt a bit sick, but had decided to ignore it. She had gone to the dance, drunk a few sips of beer, and then . . . Tomorrow afternoon she was to have another long treatment.

She was twenty-three years old.

BACK at the dance I soon found another partner, an attractive girl named Pirjo, also a nurse. She'd seen me with the Princess and she knew who I was.

We danced, our bodies close together. She was warm and pliant, unlike the Princess. But, for whatever reason, I had no desire to buy her an island.

That was my dream: to buy an island and marry a beautiful, healthy girl. And there, on the island, our first child would be born. The girl would love the sea and the island and our baby and me.

Pirjo began to talk about the Princess. "We did our training together. I feel awfully sorry for her. She's a very sick girl."

"What's wrong with her?" I asked.

"The scientific name is *Lymphogranulomatosis*, a cancer mainly involving the lymph nodes, spleen and liver. You've probably heard of it as Hodgkin's disease. She hasn't many months to live."

So that explained her cold, impersonal air, I thought.

After the dance I took Pirjo home. I kissed her good-night and we agreed to meet the next day at the Sandstrand, the beach.

FOR HOURS the Princess lay on her bed without undressing, afraid the least physical effort would make her sick again. When at last she got under the sheet it was almost morning. She found it hard to breathe, as if all the air in her room had been used up.

She caught her breath, and a nerve somewhere inside her quivered with fear. She could feel the irritation coming on. She turned and tossed in her bed, the sheet sticking to her damp skin, although she felt cold. Her brain was tortured by ugly, meaningless thoughts. Through her mind would flash the name

of this illness that had been creeping up on her stealthily for years, baiting her, terrifying her, keeping watch over her, chilling her, wearying her and sucking her dry. She didn't think of death itself, only of all that was lying in wait for her on the way to death. How could she keep on fighting, with that terrible knowledge always inside her? How many days or weeks would it be before a longing for the peace of death took hold of her?

Perhaps it already had.

There was a small box of pills on her dresser. How easy it would be to slip across her room and finish off the pills and her troubles at the same time. I'd have to take at least twenty-five pills, she thought matter-of-factly, and I ought to crush them so they'd be absorbed sooner. But what if I regretted it terribly, just at the point of death, and suddenly saw the reason for everything and understood and was sorry?

Thoughts of the pills, and of the pain and irritation, went round and round, wearing her out. And she remembered: there's a rip in my nightgown. I ought to put on another. I wouldn't want people to find me in a torn nightgown.

The thoughts were nothing new. On countless other nights her mood had darkened as the sky outside grew light. But somehow she knew she would not kill herself. She had an instinctive aversion to anything that conflicted with her religion and upbringing.

The night thoughts would pass, daytime would come and she'd be out in the world again, among the living, trying to look alive herself, no matter how the pain gnawed at her and made her chatter with cold.

Occasional visits to the frontier of the land of horror can be stimulating, can even provide a shuddering enjoyment. But the Princess was no visitor to the frontier, she lived in that land. This was a normal night for her. Horror had become ordinary, it no longer even made her shudder. True, she often cried out with pain. And sometimes shame swept over her. She was ashamed of what the disease was doing to her, of what it was doing to her body.

IN THE MORNING THE PRINCESS sat up in bed and was surprised to discover that the effort didn't make her sick. Encouraged, she got out of bed and brushed her teeth. Despite her dark thoughts of a few hours earlier, she felt almost hopeful.

She had planned to visit her parents that morning, but it was very hot. Other nurses, passing her room, asked her to go with them to the Sandstrand for a swim, and she agreed.

At the beach the other girls spread towels on the hot sand before lying down, but the Princess welcomed the heat. She lay on the burning sand and stretched out so as to capture more of the sun's warmth. She had loved warmth long before she knew about her illness. She enjoyed being given coffee in bed, not because she was lazy but because she loved to feel the hot liquid circulating inside her while she was still warm in bed. She frequently sat on her hands, to warm them. She liked to wear woolen gloves and stockings. She liked lighting the fire, and when she made coffee she'd hold her hands over the gas flame for a few seconds before putting on the pot.

WHEN I came to the beach with Pirjo, we joined the other nurses and lay chattering and joking. The Princess laughed only once, and her laughter had no ring to it. Once, too, she smiled at something that had made all the others laugh. I was reminded of a flower that has been touched by the frost before it has had time to blossom.

The water was cold, and no one but the Princess went in. Afterward she told me that, though she hated cold, the icy water soothed the prickling of her skin. I noticed that her lips looked less drawn, but there were tremors lying in wait in her voice.

The Princess was by far the prettiest of all the nurses, yet her beauty seemed to have no reality. It was too remote, too lacking in animation—the hollow beauty of a statue. Her skin had no glow, and her lipstick looked garish in contrast to her pallor. The drugs she'd been taking had caused her arms to swell.

An air of pain was all around her, and only once did she join in the chatter with any enthusiasm, and that was when we were talk-

ing about children. Something deep inside her eyes lit up then. Yet how could she have a child when she lacked strength enough even for herself? Besides, she had only a few more months to live. Why bring a child into the world, only to leave it motherless?

Lying beside her on the beach, I suddenly wanted to touch her hand. I ran my hand through the sand, but snatched it back before it had touched hers. What the devil was I thinking of? I told myself that I should leave, and never see the Princess again.

I asked Pirjo if she was hungry. She nodded, and we decided to have lunch. As we walked across the sand, away from the others, I felt an almost uncontrollable desire to turn and look at the Princess just once more. But I didn't, because I was with Pirjo. Why should I worry about the Princess? Pirjo and I were both free that evening, and we'd have a good time together.

EVEN SO, two days later I invited the Princess to go to the beach with me. She accepted reluctantly—or, rather, with indifference. And her indifference, I soon discovered, was harder to take than any pretense of gaiety.

I lay next to her in the sun and tried to make conversation. She barely answered. Every now and then a little spark would appear in her eyes, but it went out again as suddenly as it had appeared. Then her face took on a look that should never have been on the face of a girl of twenty-three. It made me feel much younger than she, more childish and immature, even though I was three years older.

I touched her hand, then held it firmly. Her skin burned me—perhaps from cold, perhaps from warmth. I only remember that it burned.

I never mentioned her tragedy. It was so great that, seen at close quarters, one couldn't get it into proper perspective. If she had hurt a leg or lost a finger, there would have been plenty of words and a great deal of sympathy. As it was I spoke of other things, talking too much in an effort to counteract her silence.

"I'm going to get some ice cream," I said. "Do you want some?"

She shook her head. I went off and bought some ice cream for

myself. A little later, a pop tune came floating over to us from a transistor radio.

"Shall I go and choke the owner of that radio?" I asked.

She rolled over onto her stomach and looked at me.

"You know how things are with me," she said. "You took me out because you're sorry for me, didn't you?"

I didn't know what to say, though I'd tried to prepare myself for this inevitable question, realizing that the Princess would detect pity a mile away. I gave an uncertain smile, then looked off to my right where a cemetery nestled close to the shoreline. I met her eyes again and knew that I'd hesitated too long. It was already too late to answer her.

I took her hand in both of mine. Her hand still burned me, though her skin was cold. I tried to warm it. Her eyes rested searchingly on my face, and I looked away, still holding her hand.

A breath or two of wind passed over us, and I thought there was cruelty in the wind.

WE WENT to lunch. Afterward I took her to the Radiotherapy Clinic, and said I'd wait for her.

In a few minutes she returned to the waiting room.

"Can they give a treatment so fast?" I asked.

"No, they couldn't give me one. My temperature had gone up too high."

"Can't they operate?"

She shook her head. "It's everywhere, in all the glands. They can't cut out all of me. I discovered it too late."

Glad that she seemed prepared to talk, I asked, "When did you first notice it?"

"Three years ago. I was feeling funny and running a slight temperature, so I went to bed for a few days, but it didn't help. Besides the temperature, I had this creeping, itching sensation all over my body. I went for an examination and my blood sedimentation rate\* was twenty-two. The doctor said I must have some

\* The rate at which the red cells will sink to the bottom of a test tube of blood. This test is used to measure the progress of certain diseases.



kind of an infection. A week later I went again, and my sedimentation rate was thirty-eight. The next week it was forty-four, so then they took a specimen from my throat. I got to the point of hoping I had TB, but I didn't."

We left the clinic and I walked her to her room.

That evening I was on the point of phoning her, but managed to stop myself. She's right, I told myself. I'm only feeling sorry for her. I do her nothing but harm by seeing her. I reminded myself that I had yet to find the girl I was going to buy that island for. I'd go dancing and continue my search.

Naturally, her illness frightened me. I pictured her swollen arms, the yellowish tinge of her flesh, the spreading color of death. I thought of the cancerous growths. If I'd known what her immediate future was to be, I'd have broken off our relationship right then.

SHE SAT alone in her room, half expecting me to call her. Several times the phone rang in the hall and she went out to answer it. But it was always for one of the other nurses, and they were all out dancing.

Disconsolate, she lay on her bed and stared at the ceiling. It was still early, not yet bedtime, I ought to eat something, she thought. But she made no effort to rise. Why should she struggle to do anything? Why not give up completely?

She turned on her side and hugged her pillow as if it were someone she loved.

"A child," she said aloud to the empty room. Although on the conscious surface of her mind she had reconciled herself to never being a mother, her subconscious had refused to cooperate. Deep down, she never let go of the idea that she was a woman and ought to have children.

She had always wanted children. At home in her parents' house was a large chest filled with baby clothes, pale blue and white, which she had stitched when she was in her teens. She hadn't opened the chest since she'd heard.

A flame of longing flickered for a moment, then died. She

continued to lie on her bed, immobile, confused by her own existence. A short time ago the notion of death had been like the line of the horizon out at sea—something distant, which never drew any closer. Now, gradually, her strength was melting away like snow in the sunless days of early spring.

Outside, the sky darkened, and at length she got up and drew the curtains. Although she made a move toward her bookshelf, she still did not turn on the light. There was no book absorbing enough to make her forget the itching torment of her flesh. She returned to her bed and sat there, irritated that a strip of evening light shone in between the curtains. There were evenings when she wished it would rain, if only for the sake of harmony. Sun and light mocked her.

Suddenly the old longing came over her—the longing to be an ordinary woman, happy in a child's caresses and a man's love. It came on with such force that she flung herself across the bed and sobbed for more than an hour.

I PHONED her the next day and told her I wanted to see her.

"Are you sure?" Her voice was low, almost a whisper.

"I'd like to see you this evening," I said, beginning to hope she would say no. After all, she was sick and might not want to see anyone.

But she said yes, and I was almost annoyed. On my way over to her place I bought her some flowers, telling myself I was only making a sick call. Later I realized I'd been hoping her refusal would forestall some plans about which I'd told no one, not even myself.

She was lying with her eyes fixed on the door. Her face was flushed and her limbs were motionless. She had neither the energy nor the desire to get up and brush her hair and tidy herself. She wanted warmth and company but did nothing to encourage anyone to come near her. On the contrary, she tried to frighten me away, she told me later. The thing that interested her about me was that I had written a book about a family without a mother. In my novel, the mother had given birth and died.

"Hey, Princess," I said. I had wanted my voice to sound warm and full of enthusiasm. But it was thin, hollow.

She offered me the only armchair in the room but I took a footstool instead. "May I smoke?" I asked.

"Of course," she said, and got up to put a kettle on for tea.

When she came back we chatted about everything under the sun, and I felt pleased with my skill in avoiding topics connected with illness. I had thought that as I became accustomed to her illness the feeling for her that it had aroused in me would gradually grow weaker. Instead, it was growing stronger and deeper, digging its way down inside me, to where I was most vulnerable.

When she brought the teapot in she was bent over like an old woman. In many of her helpless gestures you could read the power of her illness, which had drained her of the will to struggle, to desire with any persistence, or to plan. But there was still something in her expression that hinted at resistance to defeat, a rejection of the cold isolation of near death, a longing for the warmth of friendship.

Perhaps part of her is turning to ice, I thought, but part is thawing too. What could I know of the way a young woman reacts when she feels the end is approaching?

Later she lay down on the bed, and I went and lay beside her. We were satisfied as people are when they are happy to be together, not wanting to move, not saying anything or asking anything, though there were a thousand things I would have liked to ask and say.

She looked almost content. There are nights when you can find pleasure merely in the warmth of someone's company. I was in a half doze when I heard her moan a little as the itching returned. When I kissed her, I realized she'd been crying.

Our kisses were warm but not passionate. I don't believe there was any question of pity on my part—I was so close to her that I would have had to hide pity from myself in order to hide it from her. I felt respect and reverence when I kissed her.

As the night wore on I discovered new things about her. Physical illness can cause severe mental suffering, and the patient

who thinks of nothing but his illness ends up in a world that is shrunken and distorted. But awareness of death can have the opposite effect: it can enlarge your world, make you more spiritually alive. She had thought about this, and we talked of it.

"They say you mature when you realize death is coming," she said. "People know that death exists but they don't recognize it as an eventual goal. I've seen that that's what it is—I see everything more clearly now. Of course my life has changed. Before, I used to think and plan ahead, as other people do, but now I've learned to stand still and enjoy the moment—those moments I can enjoy."

She paused, then went on. "When I'm not feeling sick or tearing myself to pieces, I've been reasonably happy. All your inner strength seems to be redoubled when you know you're going to die. In the old days the main thing in my life was waiting—for something, I didn't know what. Now that's no longer there."

It had grown light outside and I could see the Princess's face quite clearly. The bluish eyelids were drawn down over her eyes; she was quiet and calm.

All this about death did not seem at all terrifying. On the contrary, she'd made me feel that I could peacefully accept the fact of her dying if only I had some assurance that her death would be painless and easy. While the rest of us had been rushing around, I thought, the Princess had been convincing herself of death. She had felt death's chill, so she no longer threw away a moment of her life. She had moments of happiness, and moments when she felt full of strength and truth. She had rid herself of envy and started living inwardly, where all great life is truly lived.

"How did you feel when you first heard?" I had to ask the question.

"I wanted to die," she answered simply. "But now that urge comes less often. And I don't think I ever mean it seriously. No matter what, I seem to have a strong will to live."

When I first met her I had thought she seemed without hope, but this was merely a surface impression. Somewhere inside her

## *The Princess*

there was always a spark of hope, and it was this little spark that kept the Princess alive even when, despite deep-ray treatment and innumerable drugs, her life thread was at its slenderest. Without it the longing for children and a home would not have remained.

TOWARD morning she dozed off and actually slept for half an hour. I went into the kitchen, scaring a few nurses there, and made tea. I took it in to the Princess.

"Good morning," she said. It sounded the finest greeting in the world.

While she sipped her tea I snagged a morning paper from one of the nurses and looked through the "Apartments to Rent."

"Here's a two-room apartment in Berghäll," I said.

She stretched and yawned, still a little drunk with sleep.

"Total area five hundred and eighty square feet, and it has a bathroom."

She took another sip of tea and then slipped down under the bedclothes.

I went to the telephone, made a few calls and came back. "I've got the apartment," I said.

She mumbled something inaudible beneath the bedclothes.

"Come out and give me a kiss," I said.

She came out and gave me a quick kiss on the cheek. "What do you want a two-room apartment for?" she asked.

"My bachelor quarters won't be big enough now that we're getting married," I said. "You look surprised. Did I forget to tell you?"

"You nut—aren't you going to ask me whether I will?"

"Will you?" I asked. "I'm handsome, I hold the junior record in discus throwing, and I know three Christmas carols by heart."

Suddenly she became serious. "You'd better go," she said.

"Of course I'll go," I said. "But we have to name the wedding day first. How long do you want to be engaged? A week?"

She wasn't listening. She had hidden herself under the bedclothes again. I stood still, feeling very scared. I was just on the

point of going when I heard her voice: "I have plenty of sheets and towels, but we need furniture and pots and pans."

I leaped over to the bed and found her face between the sheets. She looked almost happy. "You're in for a bad time," she said. "You'd better be prepared in advance."

We kissed and then she said, "Don't get too fond of me. Promise you'll never love me."

If she had asked me to promise to love her forever, I would have said, "That's asking an awful lot."

But she said, "Promise you'll never love me."

And that was asking too much.

THE FOLLOWING evening she was very tired. She was standing in her room when I arrived, and I went and put my arms around her, but she lacked the strength even to kiss me.

"Have lunch with me tomorrow. I'll call you," I said.

"No, I have to go for a treatment, and they're going to take a lot of tests again."

"Then I'll write you a letter and send you flowers."

"Children need a mother as well as a father," she said in an almost toneless voice. "It's a crime to bring a child into the world that won't have both."

"Let's make some tea," I said.

"I'm sure you could almost be a mother too," she said. "I read your book. It showed tenderness, and that's important."

I tried to kiss her but couldn't tear her away from her thoughts. She was cold and thin and she was slipping through my arms down to the floor.

"Listen to the rain," she said softly. "Why does it rain so much? Come closer."

I sat down on the rug beside her. I kissed her face, which was icy cold and very soft. I wondered whether I should tell her about my island and my dream, but it seemed too absurd. She was a dying woman.

"Why is it always raining?" she muttered. Then she collapsed, falling across the rug. I lifted her up and tucked her in bed.

I opened the window. It was as clear and warm outside as it had been all day. It had not rained for a week.

There were days like that, when she withdrew into herself and lay almost insensate. She didn't hide herself exactly—I could sit in her room or lie down beside her—but her words and gestures showed that she wanted to be left in peace. I respected her wishes. Something told me that she needed those times, that it was somehow good for her to abandon herself completely to hopelessness for an hour or a day.

It may seem strange that I should have allowed her to feel that way. I can't explain it except to say that it seemed best. (There's so much I can't explain. Sometimes we laughed, for instance, when you would have thought we should cry; and we cried when you would have thought we should be laughing.) It was only a feeling that told me that the torment within her had to be allowed full expression now and again so that her powers of resistance wouldn't be squandered, that someone without hope shouldn't be given too much hope all at once, for it would be hard to be deprived of it again.

She always came out of these dehumanizing spells—these periods that she called “beneath human dignity”—with dignity. We talked about it at length and each time more frankly. The periods of withdrawal began to decrease, both in frequency and duration, and eventually weeks would go by without one.

A kind of matter-of-fact apathy took their place. It scarcely made her any happier, but it seemed to be a saner reaction and in the long run it supported her better.

I realized that the most important thing for her was to go punctually for her treatments and to keep careful track of the course of her disease. No possible source of help could be refused. She took her medicines and deep-ray and mustard-gas treatments, and she summoned up her own powers of resistance—her good humor and abiding zest for life—along with quantities of love and fresh air.

Meanwhile, I studied up on cancer and decided to write a book about the men who fight the disease. It was known that the mind

had a great influence on the course of cancer, yet too few people paid any attention to the recovery statistics. If a popular author wrote a positive, factual report on the fight against cancer, it might help a great many patients to realize that it can sometimes be overcome.

I told the Princess my idea. She thought it made sense.

"What about your relatives?" I asked. "What effect would a more positive approach have on them?"

"It would certainly do them good," said the Princess. "They treat me as though . . ." She paused for a moment. "Well, if I catch a cold or get a pain in my leg or whatever, they make the most terrible fuss over me because they're afraid, and then I myself get frightened. You see, cancer frightens people out of their wits. People treat me as if I were condemned to death."

"But according to all logic, you *are* under sentence of death."

"Oh yes," she said.

"Then what's wrong with their reaction?"

"I just want them to behave *normally* toward me," she said.

I considered my own feelings about her and wondered whether she still suspected me of pitying her. My heart was neither so small nor so big that I could marry a woman for reasons of pity. I loved her and I loved life. I wanted us to walk a long time in the sunshine before the shadows fell. I wanted the Princess to come to our island and live there with me for years and years.



## TWO

WE WERE married. Her mother tried to warn me about her illness, and my mother was skeptical. "I'm not sure I'll come to the wedding," she said.

But it was only a moment's hesitation and she came, of course, like the wonderful woman she is, and was absolutely enchanted by the Princess.



## *The Princess*

The Princess did not move down to Berghäll with me immediately, but stayed on for a while at the nurses' residence. I worked in the apartment, getting it ready.

One day Pirjo came to see me. "Remember me?" she said.

Of course I remembered her. She was as sexy as ever.

"How's she getting along?" Pirjo asked, sitting on the bed.

"The Princess is fine," I said. "The hemoglobin has risen to over eleven—she'll be a blood donor soon."

We talked about the Princess. Pirjo said she was glad to find me in because she had wanted to know how the Princess was feeling. It was obvious to me that Pirjo was after something, and she was used to getting what she wanted.

She leaned back, crossing one knee slowly over the other, revealing her pretty legs. She saw my glance and leaned back still more. Her lower lip quivered provocatively.

I was gripped by desire, yet when she got up and came toward me I found myself warding her off. I pushed her away and she sank down to the floor.

All I could think of just then was the Princess and my love for her. "Get up," I said to Pirjo. "I know a nurse is supposed to have a good bedside manner, but Florence Nightingale might think you overdid it."

She stood up and tore into me like a raging fury: "You were crazy to marry her. She's finished; she hasn't many weeks left to live. You're only hurting yourself and her." Then she grew calmer and sat on the edge of the bed. "I've seen several Hodgkin's patients. The end isn't pretty."

I lit a cigarette and said, "I think I could teach you something in spite of your nurse's training. You turned red just now when you were angry: a good example of the mind's influence on the body. You know very well that there are patients who die if they're told too suddenly that they're fatally ill. Such news can cause a cramp in the coronary artery, a failure of the blood supply to the brain. I've learned a good deal about all this. Women who've been told they can never have a baby may suddenly find they can have a whole houseful if, for example, they

adopt a baby and cease to worry. Thoughts affect the whole organism."

"Of course I know all that," said Pirjo. "What's that got to do with you two?"

"The Princess might be another example," I said. "A fresh background, a home of her own, a different emotional atmosphere and quantities of love might save her. She needs a man who loves her, and children."

"Hodgkin's patients don't have children," she said. "If you try to have a baby the Princess will have to have an abortion. You're crazy."

"Someday I'll send you a snapshot of our children," I said, and closed the door behind her.

I WENT OUT to buy some flowers. Then I phoned the Princess and asked her to come for the night.

When she finally appeared she was in a very low state. She looked years older again, and the bitter line around her mouth was like the scar of a freshly healed wound.

"I'm just a little tired," she said. "After the treatment I had to do some shopping, and then it was my turn to cook for everybody. But soon I'll be cooking only for the two of us."

She tried desperately to talk brightly and cheerfully but finally gave up, and her voice went dead, the way it did when she wanted to cut off communication between us. She just sat on the bed with that empty expression in her eyes and her head drooping wearily.

Nothing could have frightened me more than this extreme listlessness. All sorts of wild thoughts ran through my head. For a while I just looked at her, vainly seeking some spark in her eyes that might give me support for my dreams.

Then, to my surprise, I kissed her and started talking about tomorrow.

She didn't change for a while, but then the corners of her mouth began to tremble. Whether she was on the brink of laughter or tears, I never knew. It didn't matter.

*The Princess*

"Yes, let's go out tomorrow," she said. "Let's go to the park. It's sure to be lovely weather."

"And we'll take sandwiches and coffee, and a rug to sit on and a book."

"Will you tell me fairy tales?"

"As many as you like."

"Really happy fairy tales?"

"As happy as can be."

She almost smiled and soon we were in each other's arms. Although the room was warm, it was as though we were trying to protect each other against the cold.

After many caresses we tried to sleep but it was no use. We ate a few crackers and drank some fruit juice and I smoked a cigarette and then we listened to the radio. But still sleep didn't come. The facts were so bitter and terrible that we hardly grasped that they were also true. . . .

"You forget a little when you sleep," I said.

"But I dream about it," she replied.

"Dreams are different—you don't need to believe them if you don't want to."

"But tomorrow . . ."

I fell asleep at last but, deep sleeper though I ordinarily am, I woke at once when she sat up in bed, moaning.

"Take a pill," I said, though I knew it was useless; she was so tired no pills could help.

Restless, I went to the bathroom, and pattered around the kitchen. I played with the refrigerator which we'd bought that very day. It was the first piece of equipment the Princess and I had bought together.

"I talked to myself a little while you were gone," she said when I returned.

"I wasn't gone—only to the bathroom and the kitchen."

"You're always gone when you aren't close enough for me to touch you. Give me a kiss."

She was not looking noticeably better, but we kissed, and she pressed against me with an air of desperation. It was several

hours after midnight and no longer dark in the room. I looked at her face. It was made to reveal far bolder expressions than any she had yet worn.

That night the bold expressions appeared.

I took her face between my hands. "We can't go on like this; we'll have to take precautions. Otherwise there'll be a baby."

"I want a baby," she said.

"But it couldn't come to anything," I said.

"I want to have *something*," she said.

So fear and reason were ignored. Happiness and tenderness swept over us, and at the same time we saw quite clearly the secret of our whole world.

We needed no fairy tales, no wine and no great words of love that night. Everything was there in the blessed, surging intoxication of our embrace.

WE DIDN'T wake until the telephone rang well after noon. It was a good thing it rang when it did or I would have been late for work.

The Princess was sitting up when I came back from the phone. She looked rested, her hair was shining, and some of the bitter look had gone from around her mouth.

"I slept for more than six hours," she said. "I haven't slept as long as that for months." She shook her head and looked straight upward, smiling, her long hair falling over her shoulders.

For a change, she didn't want to stay in the warmth of the bed. She was positively impatient to be up and doing.

"It's a lovely day," she said. "I want to go for a long walk in the park, to go and look at the children. Come with me—for a little while anyway."

"It's too late for that now. I have to be at work in an hour."

She made a face, then jumped out of bed.

"Frightful!" she called from the bathroom.

"What's frightful?"

I found her in front of the mirror. "Just frightful! My hair! I *must* go to the hairdresser's today."

I couldn't remember her ever wanting to visit the hairdresser's, but after that night she began going every week, even though she suffered under the hot dryer. And she looked at clothes in shopwindows and bought masses of ridiculous beads and earrings. One day, too, I noticed she was wearing perfume.



### THREE

As THE weeks passed, everything seemed more hopeful than before. Things went well for me at my job and my books continued to sell. The Princess and I were able to live quite comfortably.

She was expecting a baby. And she went forward with that knowledge supporting her. Something new was growing inside her and her mind became immune to sick thoughts. Anything at all might happen, but it could not be bad, for she was protected now by something undefiled within her—something that was healthy.

We took long walks, discussed child care endlessly, and shopped together when we could. One day when I opened the packages she had brought home I held up a couple of lollipops.

"Who'd you buy these for?" I asked.

"For myself," she said, laughing happily.

She began buying turnips and carrots to gnaw on, and quantities of sticky candies. Before, she had never been able to stand sweet things.

The whole thing tickled me. Once when I was away on a reporting job in northern Finland I found myself chewing on a carrot because I guessed that she would be eating something of the sort and because it was going to be almost a full day before I saw her again. I sent her a telegram to say I loved her.

She often made jokes now. The first time she did it I was taken by surprise. I hadn't known her before her illness, and her jokes

and her playfulness didn't fit in with my notion of her as a person.

Of course she was often sick still, and the itching actually grew worse now that she was expecting a baby. This was partly because she had stopped taking her medicine. She was apparently only taking a few vitamins—and cortisone, of course.

"Why aren't you taking that medicine?" I asked on the day I realized what she was doing.

"I'm afraid it might hurt the baby," she said. "It makes no difference what happens to me so long as he stays healthy and grows well inside."

"What do the doctors say?"

She didn't reply, and I guessed she was trying to conceal her pregnancy from her doctors until it was too late to have an abortion. She was prepared to give her life for her child.

I contacted one of the doctors secretly so that he could follow developments at her routine examinations. "We'll have the child, of course, but not at the cost of her life," I said.

He was very negative so far as her general condition went—her blood count was appallingly bad—but positive when he spoke of our faith and the effect our hope must have on her spirit.

ON MY WAY to Berghäll one evening I went into a café and bought some lollipops. When I got home the Princess was lying on the bed, tearing at her skin.

"Open the window," was all she said.

I felt hurt. At least she could have thanked me for the lollipops or said she was glad to see me. But she said nothing, even though I asked her all sorts of things while I fixed myself some food.

When I had eaten I watched television for a while. Then I undressed and got into my bed, which stood a little apart from hers. I was irritated by her silence.

"You might at least answer me sometimes," I said.

She turned her back to me and hid herself. I rolled over on my other side and was almost asleep when a weary voice came out of the darkness.

"Give me a good-night kiss."

I pretended to be asleep.

"A little kiss," she said again.

I didn't want to drag myself out of my drowsiness to go and kiss her. On the other hand, I knew she wouldn't ask again, and then I'd hate myself and be unable to sleep. I leaned forward and stretched across the space between our beds and gave her a fumbling kiss.

"Glorious, absolutely glorious," she cried, clinging to me. "Do it again."

"What did I do?"

"Darling, you kissed me like a child. He'll kiss me just like that when he's a month or two old. If you had no stubble on your cheek it would be exactly like a baby kissing me—his mummy. Darling, I'm going to be a mother.... I'm going to bear a child.... Dear God, there's a child growing inside me. Put your arms around me, hug me hard."

I put on the light and looked at her. Her face was alive and there were flames in her eyes. I kissed her again. I kissed her as I imagine you would kiss a goddess.

"I'm thirsty. Are you?" she asked.

"Yes," I said. "I'll get some fruit juice."

Going to the kitchen, I noticed that the chest of baby clothes was open. Though it would be seven months before the baby came, she'd been looking at the clothes. She had never dared open the chest before.

When I came back with the fruit juice she was lying in bed singing—out of tune, but *singing*.

"Drink," I said.

"Thank you, Guni." Her hand stole over to me. "Good night," she said. "We're going to have a baby—a baby that will cry and be red and be a real baby that will come out of my body."

I lay for a long time, stealing glances at her after she was asleep. She was sleeping better now, and looking better too. Her arms were no longer swollen, though she had put on weight. And she said sometimes that the lumps, the lumps of her disease, had ceased to bother her.

SHE LAY IN BED TURNING the pages of a book. Soon she put the book aside. She lay quietly for a long time, then suddenly tensed up. A thrill of something new shot through her. It was as though a ball of cotton had popped up against the inner wall of her stomach.

She wanted to shout to me, but paused. She must be certain first, must feel the ball of cotton again. It was a long and trying wait; the movement was so tiny that she had to lie absolutely still and listen with her whole body.

Then she met my eyes and understood that she didn't need to say a word. Though neither of us spoke, I knew what had happened.

She continued to lie motionless as if keeping watch on some shy wild animal that would disappear if she made any movement. And then it came again. It was still so weak it could hardly be called a push or a kick. It was like a little shudder, or a bubble bursting.

A life, starting.

She was filled with peace and felt whole. Nothing bad can happen to us now, she thought; we're immortal. Even though she was sleepy she wanted to get out of bed, to see what her body felt like standing up.

Rising so suddenly made her dizzy, but her body felt warm. Joy burned within her; pain was gone or transformed into joy.

She lay down again and I knelt beside her. Tears streamed down both our faces.

"It's so fantastic—I can't explain it to you," she said. "Do you understand?"

"Of course I understand," I said.

"Do you really?"

"I think so. I think you're prepared to give your life for this. And when I think that, Princess, I understand."

She grew stronger and more beautiful that evening, and for several days following. And nothing could destroy her good humor. Feelings of strength and gratitude poured through her. She was two, a life was growing inside her.



## *The Princess*

That's the way to fight death, I thought. Give life. In such a way, when you think you're at the end of something, you're really at the beginning.

IN THE morning when she woke up nothing was changed. Her shining hair, the color in her face and the brightness in her eyes all told me that now at last she had slept long and well.

"I love you," she said as I stood over her, and she pulled me down and hugged me.

I was silent. She didn't mean that she loved just me; she loved everything. I didn't deserve all the love she felt, but I was the one who was closest. If she could have embraced the whole world she would have done so.

She had warmth in her body even before she'd drunk her hot coffee or got dressed. I'd opened the window, but still she lay there without even the covers over her. Light-headed with happiness, she was ready to squander her warmth.

I took breakfast to her in bed. I wanted her to eat before she got up. Sometimes by doing so she could avoid being sick.

She ate and all seemed well. She managed to lie there almost half an hour before she was sick, and then it was only a little.

Luckily I didn't have to go to work, and was able to be with her all day long. She was busy all around me, dusting, sweeping, setting the table. And her love brimmed over; I could feel it even when she was bustling about in another room.

She walked so beautifully; the rhythm came from within, and she walked carefully so as not to jolt the baby. True, the burden in her stomach made her lean forward a little. She had stopped wearing high heels.

I BEGAN to see that she had remarkable powers of endurance. Once we walked more than three miles through deep snow outside Helsinki. I was very tired afterward, although I consider myself in good physical condition. But she came through like a breeze.

In the days following the cotton balls she was everywhere and I

whirled after her. We bought tons of things for the baby: thermometers, pacifiers, toys, soaps and powders, and an incredible quantity of tiny clothes. She sat sorting them and talking to them, handling them as if they were works of art.

It would be the greatest injustice in the world if she didn't get her baby, I thought. I longed for her to be able to embrace her child, to feel a little arm around her neck and a heart against her shoulder.

Everything she did was determined by consideration for the baby. If she wanted to pick up something off the floor, she did not bend but went down on her knees, moving with a soft precision that seemed a bit incongruous with the clumsiness of her body.

She could still get her newest dress on—one we had bought a few months before—but one day it split at the armhole while she was combing her hair. She laughed and the laughter came from deep inside.

Many things that had lost their meaning for her since her illness now recovered their significance. She was even able to plan for the future. "We'll have to move out to the country when the baby starts walking," she said.

"Why, we're very comfortable here in Berghäll."

"Oh yes, but when he's a few years old he should be in the country."

"Of course. But he might start walking at eleven months. And we can't move as soon as that." I often had a violent longing to take the child to the country. To flowers, bees and sun. To an island.

"He's going to be a fine child," she said.

"He's going to be damn fine."

"You mustn't say that." The Princess looked at me reproachfully. "I don't want him to be with people who swear. It isn't good for him."

She was silent for a while, and then came another jerk in her stomach. She sat with half-closed eyes and was filled with something that only she knew about.

I forced myself to pick up a book and read, for I knew that she wanted to be in peace. She wanted to be alone with this new something inside her, to sit still and to wonder.

THERE WAS defiance in her joy.

"How much was your sedimentation rate last time?" I asked her once.

"Just over ninety."

"But suppose it goes up, now that the baby is making more demands on you?"

I regretted the question immediately. But I couldn't help worrying about her. I wasn't as oblivious to the future as she seemed to be, and I was not immune to the fear of suffering.

She was quite unaffected by my uneasiness. "It will all work out," she said.

I have always had great faith in love, and when things have gone well for me it has been due mainly to that faith. But even so, I would never have believed that love could be as strong as this, that it could fight so effectively against her illness.

Of course there was still pain, and she still felt sick every morning. But it wasn't the same dark pain as before, and the sickness didn't last for long.

One afternoon when I came home she was lying flat on her back giggling at her stomach. It had already risen so high that she could see it.

"I'm talking to him," she said. "And he's answering me. Look!" She pointed. "Kick to the right if you're a girl and to the left if you're a boy."

I laid my hand on her stomach and could feel a faint, regular movement. "It's your own pulse."

"You must have patience," she said.

I had patience, and after a quarter of an hour I felt a faint movement. To the left.

"He says he's a boy."

We laughed and joked. Her face lit up and there were depths in her eyes. Once I had assumed that her illness had forever

burned away those depths, the places where banter and sparkle are born.

She was drawing her hands across her stomach. Every now and then she stopped and pressed cautiously with her fingertips. "I'm trying to find his feet," she said.

"It'll be months yet," I said.

She moved her hands up to her chest. "My breasts are getting bigger," she said with a giggle.

One Sunday we went for a long walk in Berghäll. As we passed a small park I pointed out a war memorial.

"That was put up by an infantry regiment," she said with a knowing smile.

"Was it?" I said, wondering how she knew about an insignificant memorial tucked away in a part of town she'd lived in only a few months. "How did you know?" I asked.

"I know more than that," she said, and started reciting: "*The survivors of the Eleventh Infantry Regiment erected this memorial in honor of their heroic comrades who lost their lives in the War of 1939-40. October 13, 1940.*"

I looked at her in astonishment. Then I laughed suddenly, and she realized I had guessed. Beside the memorial was a big sand-pit where children played. She had sat there looking at the children so often that she had learned the whole inscription by heart.

Now I too watched the children playing. She must have her child, I thought, she must, she must.

THEN CAME an evening when I found her lying silent with her face to the wall. When I laid my hand on her shoulder she was shaken by a paroxysm of weeping. I turned her around and there was hopelessness in her eyes. For the first time since the balls of cotton I saw that ravaged, bitter line around her mouth.

She had discovered some new growths. It was not unexpected and did not in itself cause any sense of catastrophe. But together with her tiredness, and renewed pain in her liver, kidneys, skin and breast, it turned everything to a dark gray.

The Princess was not afraid for her own sake, but her illness

was spreading alarmingly close to the baby. As a nurse she knew that prompt deep-ray treatment was called for, and she knew what the decision of the doctors would be—those who had already recommended legal abortion. Three weeks' treatment would mean thirty-five hundred radiation units, in hopes of reducing the tumors which grew beside and underneath the baby.

"I won't go for an examination. I'll tell them I'm getting along fine and if they come here I'll run away."

What have you done? I asked myself as I lay in bed while she was in the bathroom washing. What did you expect? You had a vague idea that she would become a new person. You babbled on about the influence of the mind on the body. And you didn't even ask a doctor. Tomorrow, I thought, I'll see the doctor in charge.

She got into bed, after kissing me on the cheek—a light kiss, like a breath of wind that is neither cold nor warm.

After some minutes I heard her moving her hands against her skin. "They feel like little lumps," she said in a thick voice under the sheet.

She's feeling the cancer growths, I thought.

All was silent for a while. Then she said, "The hands are like little lumps."

"What hands?" I asked.

"His hands," she said. "I don't think he's kicking. It sounds different. Maybe he's knocking. . . ." She laughed a low, quite happy laugh and repeated: "He's knocking. Maybe he's wondering when he can come out."

She lay there talking nonsense to her stomach. She felt better, and the sounds inside the house and out immediately became more cheerful. It often felt like that. When she was worse the sounds that floated up from the sidewalk were dreary gray. When she was filled with hopelessness the sunshine was like a knife. But when she laughed the sunshine was soft as velvet.

WHEN I came home from work the next evening I was tired, so tired that it was a long time before I could get to sleep. When at last I did drop off, she came over to my bed and shook me.

"What in the—" I began.

"Name," she said. "Name!"

"What's the matter? What are you talking about?"

"We haven't got a name for the boy yet."

"We'll call him the Phantom."

"Kai-Mikael would be nice, or Silja if it's a girl."

We joked for a while before she went back to bed.

"I'm sure it will be a boy," she said from under her sheet.

"Of course," I said. "Go to sleep now."

I dropped off again but suddenly felt her hand on my shoulder.  
"If it's a girl . . . would you be just as pleased?"

"Absolutely."

"Sure?"

"Sure."

"Could you bring up a girl just as well as a boy?"

"There's not that much difference. I think it will be all right if we both work at it together."

"You mustn't spank girls!"

"Sometimes, if the circumstances demand it."

"Well, perhaps a little."

I'll buy an island for that child and for the Princess and me, I thought when I was alone in bed again. I have four weeks' vacation a year and there's Christmas and Easter and other holidays, and we can be there then. It needn't be a large island and it must be close to the mainland. We'll build a house and have a little garden. There must be trees, rocks and a sandy beach.

We fell asleep and the Princess had a good night. In the morning she said she would make coffee and bring it to us in bed. It was Sunday and a boys' choir was singing on the radio. I lay waiting for her to come in with the coffee.

It was a strange experience—not to long for anything except an island that there was no great hurry about. Was there really nothing else that I would rather be doing, no other place where I would rather be? Was this really the greatest thing that I could imagine: to wait for the Princess with the coffee tray, to look with love at her stomach where our baby was?

## *The Princess*

I reviewed in my mind various happy experiences of the past, but none of them could compete with this. I thought of a summer Sunday when I was ten or eleven and I went out with my brother into the strawberry patch at home in Kimito to pick the sun-warmed berries. I thought of a fishing trip off the Canary Islands when I sat in a little boat and fought for three glorious hours with a huge fish before I hauled it into the boat. I thought of having my first poems published, of a swim in the Mediterranean when the air temperature was 116 degrees, of a great stein of iced beer after a football game. . . .

I even thought of all the girls who had attracted me the most. Of course there were some as good-looking as the Princess. But I had learned to love and protect her. Married happiness is like a tree: it has to grow before you can enjoy its shade. And it doesn't grow if you don't take care of it but run around admiring other plants. It takes many years. If you concentrate your love on a single tree and wait, you can see it grow, and there comes a day when you can lean against it and find coolness in its shade.

It was more than eight months since our child had been conceived. The Princess lay with half-closed eyes and waited in vain for sleep. Insomnia was still her chief torment, despite some good nights. She had accustomed herself to many other sufferings but not to this one.

Every now and then she would tear at her skin. She tried to think of something else so as to forget the itching, but soon it became unendurable. Her leg bent as though in cramp. The irritation spread, and soon her whole body was burning. Bathed in sweat, she took off her nightdress and had a few moments' peace while she rolled herself in the sheet. Then the itching came on again and anguish swept through her. It was an anguish born of thoughts that came against her will, lonely thoughts she'd already analyzed and explained away and buried, but which rose to the surface in the darkness of the night.

Meanwhile, the kicking in her stomach began again. I crossed over to her bed and tried to listen to the baby's heart.

"Feel how he kicks. My stomach is positively bruised," she said.

"It's his hands. How many has he?"

"At least two thousand."

"He'll be here soon."

"Maybe even tomorrow."

She fell asleep soon after the morning papers had been dropped outside the door. And she woke barely an hour later. But not even sleeplessness and fatigue could batter down the zest for life which the baby had given her.

It was Thursday, our third night awake, and the baby might arrive at any moment. We sat up in bed and looked at each other and I held her hand when the pains began. I was tired, and at three o'clock I fell asleep. After dozing for a while I heard her get up and go to the bathroom. She sat there for more than an hour with a book in her hand. Later I realized that she'd gone there so that her groans wouldn't wake me.

At five thirty she came in and fell across her bed.

"Now we'll go," she said.

I jumped over to the telephone and ordered a taxi.

On the way to the Maternity Institute the pains came on thick and fast. When we got there she walked very slowly, leaning on me, twenty or thirty steps to the reception desk. She was pale but smiling. She, the condemned, was going to bear a child. Our fight had not been for nothing.

At a sign that said RECEPTION FOR MATERNITY CASES, we separated. I would have liked to stay with her, but the Institute's rules did not allow it.

She had a difficult time. At first the pains came on too quickly, and after a long struggle the Princess fell asleep. When she woke up she was given some medicine which made the labor pains stronger, but still many heavy hours passed and the number of doctors around her increased. The placenta had become partially detached and both mother and baby were in danger.

In the afternoon, at last, the baby was born. Half conscious, the Princess heard it was a boy.



Her lips were bitten through, her hair was tousled, her face was swollen, her eyes were burning. She felt frightened when she heard the doctors' uneasy voices. They were calling for an incubator. She could see the tiny baby covered with blood, and suddenly a terrible fear seized her. "Is he malformed?" she asked.

"Not at all," said a voice.

"He'll be a fine boy," said one of the doctors.

They all looked at her in such a kindly way, and their voices were soothing and soft. Warm mists were sweeping through her. She fell asleep.



FOUR

As soon as I knew they were both safe, I went home and had a shower. On the bathroom floor lay the book she'd been reading. It was a book about night flying by Antoine de Saint-Exupéry, the author she'd read constantly during her months of waiting.

Later in the afternoon I returned to the Maternity Institute. I still wasn't allowed to see the Princess, but I saw the boy in his incubator. He lay there behind glass, looking pitifully small.

You'll be a fine boy, I thought. Welcome, welcome.

As I came out into the early summer warmth, my elation grew. The heavens were sparkling with sunbeams. I whirled through the town until I came to the athletic field at Kottby where I'd planned to catch the streetcar. But I didn't take it.

A boy on the field was swinging a sledgehammer. A metal discus gleamed in the grass. I climbed over the railing, picked up the discus and hurled it against the sky. It sailed superbly, shining like a plate of gold, landed, then glided through the grass. I paced out the distance: sixty meters—the junior-championship distance.

I whirled on. The ground seemed to be bursting with life. Dry twigs could have exploded into blossom.

I considered going to a restaurant to eat, but I knew I'd feel lonely there, lonely for the one—the two—I loved best. So I ate at home instead, laying the table as if for a banquet. I lit candles, used a table napkin and made polite conversation with myself. The main topic was that the Princess and I had a son.

What would he be like? I wondered. One thing was certain: if ever he grew bored with life, or seemed likely to take a wrong turning, then I, his father, would tell him about the Princess. How she lost blood and strength, sleep, reason, color, weight—but fought on and won. How she gave up taking her medicine for your sake, my son, refused to be examined so that no deep rays would be sent into your body. How she was that day I took her to the hospital, and how she bled for nine hours and merely smiled.

All this I'd tell him one day, if it seemed necessary.

NEXT DAY I was allowed to see her. We went together to the little room where the boy lay in his incubator. She held my hand so hard that it hurt.

What did she look like? Imagine for yourself how a woman looks when she sees the child she has risked her life for.

She told me that, even then, she felt a vague longing to be heavy again, to be filled with another child. "I feel sorry for women who are frightened at having a baby," she said as she went back to her room, leaning on my arm. "Fear destroys half the pleasure. Giving birth is wonderful. I could go through it every day."

She lay down and I left her.

In a corridor I met a doctor who was puzzled about the Princess's lungs. "I don't understand it," he said. "Her records show that she had cancer growths in her lungs too."

"What's happened?" I asked.

"The X rays show nothing. I've never seen cleaner lungs."

I would have liked to tell him about the way the bitterness that had dwelled in the corners of the Princess's mouth had vanished. About the will to love and be loved and about the longing

## *The Princess*

to feel a little warm body against her breast. The whole thing might perhaps be only a temporary change but it was based entirely on love, which might itself be painful, but which was also positive and powerful.

I'm not a doctor and I can't analyze the change that took place in her. I can only report what I saw and felt and what I guessed that she felt. Therefore I can also report that everything I saw after her transformation appeared in quite a different light from what I had seen before.

I do not believe in any particular god, though it has happened that I've looked upward.

PLUMBERS had invaded our apartment in Berghäll, so when the Princess and the boy left the Maternity Institute we moved out to a cottage we'd been loaned on the shore. Those were wonderful days, with a garden full of flowers, apple trees and berry bushes. The air stood still and it was very hot.

"It's lovely here," I said when we arrived. But the Princess didn't even look around her; for the first few days she was interested in nothing except her child.

For two nights she didn't sleep at all, yet her illness didn't trouble her and the baby seldom cried. She was just so happy lying and watching the cradle that she didn't want to sleep. On the third night she slept a little, and when she woke she turned to look at the baby without a moment's transition from sleep to wakefulness. Only then did she stretch and rub her eyes.

"He's a good, sweet baby," she said, caressing the cradle.

We sat side by side, talking softly. Our voices had a new, solemn tone. Our everyday voices weren't good enough now that the baby had come.

She was often hungry, even first thing in the morning, and was surprised that she enjoyed her food so much.

"Please get me some milk and put the kettle on," she said.

Before, she had overflowed with kisses. Now she spoke to me with a new authority.

I did as she had asked, then I went down to the beach. After

my swim I went back to her. She was standing on the balcony with the child.

"I love you," I said.

"You're dripping water on him," she said. "You don't have to drown him, you know."

THE BOY was fine and she might just as well have joined me on the beach. But in spite of the great peace that had come to her, she was nervous on account of the child. She sat with him as though on guard. Something might fall on him. Or he might get tangled up in the sheet. He might choke. His circulation might fail. A bee might sting him. . . . Sometimes she thought his ears looked different, but she calmed herself (every time) when she realized he had been lying on one ear, so it was bound to look flatter than the other.

I came up softly beside her. "You're lovely," I said. "Look at me."

She tore her gaze from the baby for a moment and looked at me through a kind of haze.

"Go for a walk. I'll stay and look after him," I said.

She went off with dragging steps but was back in two minutes.

A jet took off from Helsinki airport and flew unusually low. I looked up. Out at sea a fisherman craned his neck until his boat nearly capsized. Some people sitting in a garden looked up. But the Princess did not look up. She gazed at her baby.

After a few days she started looking at the newspapers again. Several of them carried an announcement of the birth.

"Newspapers are funny," she said smiling. "I bled and suffered and nearly died, and now I read that *you* have had a son. Look at that," she added, with mock indignation.

I read: "*A boy has been born to Gunnar Mattsson.*"

"I must have said it was you who had him, but perhaps I didn't say it distinctly enough. You know I often have a pipe in my mouth."

She giggled.

"Now I am going to feed him," she said. "It's a funny thing,

but most women I know only nursed their babies for the first few weeks. After that they gave them formula."

"But doesn't it get boring, nursing them?"

"No, it feels just as wonderful every time."

"How long are you going on nursing him?"

"Six months at least, though the gynecologist says I shouldn't."

She started feeding him. The first time she'd nursed him, a pain had shot up through her brain like a short circuit. But it soon passed, and there came instead a mature, soft sensation of a kind she had never known before. It made her heart ache.

I watched her face as she bent over the boy. It had a gentleness that was in direct communication with the heart, a smile that was at the source of things, a beauty that came from within.

THE BOY was put out in the garden for two hours a day. Every ten minutes the Princess would move the cradle out of the sun or straighten a crease in the blanket. Her hand lingered on and caressed the air above the cot.

When the two hours were up it was time for the sauna house, where the boy's little bathtub was. I lit the fire and brought the temperature up to about 113 degrees. Slowly and carefully the Princess carried the boy to the sauna, walking barefoot on the stone path.

"Why haven't you any shoes on? You might catch a chill on those cold stones," I said one day.

"I might trip if I had shoes on."

After his bath he fell asleep, the Princess sitting beside the cradle. She made a face as she rubbed at her feet and legs.

I felt a throb of pain, and let out a cry of protest: "Good Lord, you're well now. It mustn't hurt. . . ." As feelings of tenderness, happiness and hopefulness increase, so do fear and anxiety. I was more vulnerable now.

She took my head between her hands and kissed me. "Idiot," she said, "it's only the brier bushes."

I cut down the brier bushes along the path to the sauna house, so that the Princess would be able to go barefoot.

DURING THE DAY, WHILE I worked, I longed for evening when I'd be able to see the Princess and our son. The moment I was free, I dashed back to the cottage, always running the last few hundred yards. When I got there and saw that all was well, an anxiety left me which, although quite unjustified, nevertheless took hold of me while I was away. It was a sort of luxury anxiety—something I had to feel when everything else was so good.

Then a bout of flu kept me away from the cottage for a few days. I stayed in our apartment in town and the Princess came up to see me. She was wearing a white pleated skirt and blue blouse and her complexion had a warm, healthy glow.

She'd felt strange leaving the boy. She'd paused the minute she was outside the front door. It felt as if she'd left the most important part of herself behind, even though her mother and her sister were both with him.

She stood before me, her skirt swinging. "He can almost crawl already," she said, putting her hands on her hips and flinging her hair back.

"Impossible!"

"But he lifts his head up and moves his arms when he's on his stomach. When I held his feet he moved himself forward several inches."

We kissed and she stayed with me all day.

I couldn't stay in bed, even though I still had a temperature, but spun around her while she puttered about. She did everything I needed done, swiftly and neatly and softly and surely. I felt better right away and was sure that no one who was looked after by the Princess could be sick for long.

The next day I went back to work. As I sat in my office and thought about the boy, the telephone rang and I jumped in alarm. The boy didn't like sudden loud noises. Then I realized that I was in my office and that the boy was many miles away.

ONE NIGHT her itching intensified; a lot of tiny pimples like seeds came up under her skin.

"I ought to take something now," she said. "But I won't."

## *The Princess*

"You've got to take your medicine; we'll give the boy formula. Let me look after him tonight."

The boy woke up just then and she took him up in her arms.

"It doesn't bother me now," she said. "It never bothers me when I hold him in my arms."

"You can't hold him in your arms every minute. Take your medicine for once."

After seventy-five milligrams of promethazine, and after reminding me at least five times to be sure to wake up when the boy got hungry, she went to sleep.

I took some bedding to the boy's room and lay down on the floor close to the cradle. Later he cried and I woke up.

While I fed him, everything was quiet in the house. Gloomy thoughts came to me.

What would happen if she were snatched away by her illness now? It could happen. Statistics showed that the majority of cases like hers died within five years. But what about a woman who had borne a child?

What would happen if she were to die, if I were to lose everything that had given me happiness and hope and vulnerability? Would I hurl myself into my work, or take poison? Wait for time to wear away the pain? Behave with dignity? Travel? Swim in emptiness and regret, always carrying with me something which was good but which still gave pain? Thoughts of a woman who wanted to have a baby when she believed her life was over.

I was glad when the boy had had his fill and gone back to sleep. For a while I stood by his bed looking at him. "He's asleep," I said softly.

It sounded so ridiculous and inadequate when I said it. When, after a long, anxious watch, the Princess says, "He's asleep," her voice is gentler than rain but also full of strength. The warmth of the tone surges over me, and I sit there as though in prayer. I want to shout that I love her. I want to lift her up and I want to sing and dance.

But of course I sit absolutely still and bask in the gentle tone. For the boy is asleep.

WE WERE MAKING PLANS for our island and the Princess talked so eagerly that her words tumbled over one another. She started writing a list of everything we would need.

"We'll have to buy a lot of canned goods," I said.

"We won't need so much. You can fish and I can pick berries."

"I have our fishing licenses," I said, showing them to her.

She looked at them. "There isn't one for the boy."

"He can't go fishing yet."

"He's nearly three months old. He'll soon learn how to manage a fishing rod. And we'll have to open a savings account for him."

I pulled her to me violently. She probably didn't know why. I did it because I loved her and wanted to live with her for a long, long time.

BEFORE WE set off for the island, I went to the Radiotherapy Clinic. There was something in the Princess's manner that at the same time pleased and frightened me: she had suddenly become so alive, so normal, so human. Had she been cured, or was this a final burst of life before the end? Usually, victims of her illness just fade away.

But there was another question I wanted to ask. As our chat drew to a close, I said, "You know my wife's background. Can we have more children? Or, rather, *ought* we to have more children?"

His reply came straight and I whirled out, through the town and home.

That afternoon we were on our way to the island when I pulled up the car. There was something I'd forgotten to buy. I jumped out and, after a minute or two, came back with a paper bag. "For you," I said, then added, "I saw the doctor in charge this morning."

"Thanks. What did the doctor say?"

"I asked him whether we ought to have any more children."

"What did he say?"

I opened the bag and poured the contents onto her lap. "There's a supply for you, in case we stay long on the island."

It was my way of saying it.



## *The Princess*

She gave a sob of joy and pressed the lollipops against her breast. Then she picked up our child. She held our smiling baby up to me and smiled just as sweetly herself.

That was her way of saying it.

### POSTSCRIPT

BY HAROLD S. DIEHL, M.D.

*Director, Research and Medical Affairs  
American Cancer Society*

*The Princess* is a lyrical and heartwarming story of a young woman's courageous struggle against a devastating and frequently fatal type of cancer. It illustrates the importance of the will to live and the influence of love in stimulating and sustaining this will. In the case of the Princess this was the love of and for her husband and her baby.

A diagnosis of Hodgkin's disease until recent years was considered a death sentence. Fortunately new types of X-ray treatment and of chemotherapy, such as the Princess received, have changed this picture, until today a considerable number of patients have prolonged and repeated remissions and a few seem permanently cured.

However, as every physician knows, the response of a critically ill patient to even the best of treatment may be influenced by the qualities of spirit the Princess exhibited. This delightful story, therefore, may kindle a spark or fan a flame of hope in the hearts of those with cancer or other serious illnesses.

## *The Princess's Husband*



Gunnar Mattsson plotted a strange and complicated course to literary fame in his native Finland. But this son of a sea captain charted his course well and became a preeminent Scandinavian writer while still in his twenties.

Born in 1937 in Helsinki, Mattsson quit school at fifteen and went out into the world, working in a brickyard and a sawmill, and as a timber cutter, farmhand and cheese maker. Following his father's calling, he also went to sea as a deckhand. During all that time he furthered his education by reading whenever he could steal the chance. John Steinbeck's *Of Mice and Men* was a revelation to the young wanderer and helped him decide that he wanted to write. He went to work on various Scandinavian newspapers and by 1963 was a reporter on *Hufvudstadsbladet*, a leading Finnish paper, where he still works as an editor.

The next year he published his first novel, *Lapitip*, a warmly humorous account of a father trying to bring up two children alone. *Lapitip* was an instant success and Mattsson found himself the happy subject of Finland's first literary fan club and the surprised recipient of a number of marriage proposals from women who refused to believe that his book was pure fiction. The proposals stopped after Mattsson's marriage to his own Princess, Seija, and both of them became internationally famous following publication of the story of their life together. As we go to press Seija Mattsson is in good health, but as with all former cancer patients, she still has regular checkups. The Mattssons live in a house outside Helsinki, and Gunnar has recently published a book about his son, entitled *The Prince*.



Painted from life by NORMAN ROCKWELL

# At Ease:

*stories I  
tell to  
friends*

A CONDENSATION OF THE BOOK BY

DWIGHT D. EISENHOWER

WITH AN 8-PAGE PHOTOGRAPHIC PORTFOLIO  
BEGINNING ON PAGE 97



ILLUSTRATIONS BY HOMER HILL

In a publishing event of the first importance General Dwight David Eisenhower recalls, "for the pleasure of it," the personal incidents that shaped and colored his life. From a childhood encounter with an angry goose to an amusing scene with the King of England, all are stories that only General Eisenhower himself could tell—and his warm, open personality shines through in the telling.

The General of the Army and former President has written the historical record of his career in his two earlier books, *Crusade in Europe* and *The White House Years*. But *At Ease* is like a friendly chat in the General's living room. In it he paints an unforgettable picture of a boy growing up in a Kansas home where the Christian virtues were prized. He remembers the high-spirited pranks which enlivened his school days and early Army service. And he tells anecdotes that reveal the human foibles of some of the famous figures of World War II. The General's observations are fresh and spontaneous, and it is a privilege to observe history-making events from his unique viewpoint.

An engaging and endearing memoir, *At Ease* will be treasured for its revealing insights into one of the most likable heroes that any age has known.

## FOREWORD

### *A man talking to himself*

TALKING to oneself in Abilene, in the days of my youth, was common enough. Generally speaking, it was a sure sign of senility or of preoccupation with one's worries. Now, it is nationally advertised as the hallmark of the efficient executive. He dictates to multiply his effectiveness.

These days, as I direct these casual reminiscences to an electronic machine that faithfully tapes every word, every tone, every mistake, perhaps I should be immersed in wonder at the changes in life since I was a boy. Instead, the preponderant notion in my mind is one that occurs to all those in a certain age bracket when they find themselves meditating on the years, the events, the people of their past. So it was before the first pyramid was built; so it will be when man is an interplanetary commuter. The notion is, of course: Time flies.

There was a period when time behaved differently. In my case, the coming Friday and the weekend respite from school always seemed, on Monday morning, an age away. Holidays, finally reached, passed instantly. But their arrival was a prolonged, tedious, barely perceptible movement of clock and calendar. I can still recall vividly my first formal idea of time and its glacial passage.

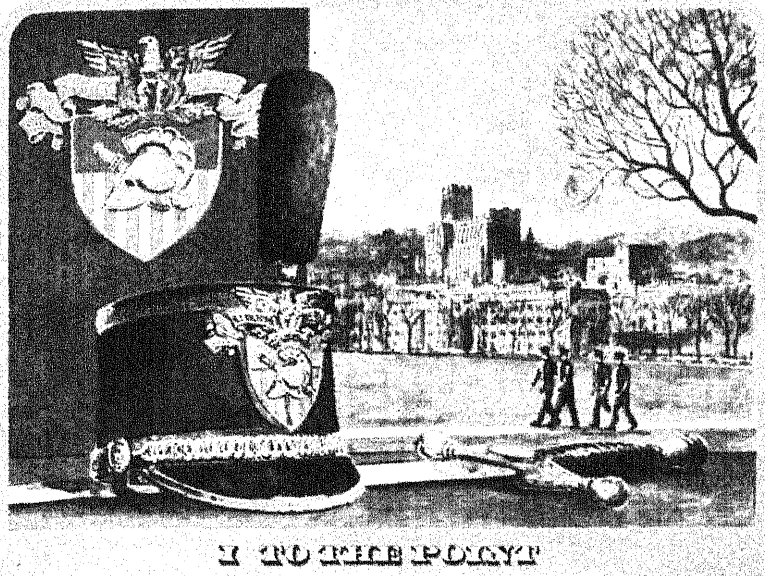
Shortly after we moved from Second Street into a new home on Fourth Street in Abilene, Kansas—I was getting along in years, being by then almost eight years old—I heard for the first time mention made of my mother's age. In conversation with a neighbor, my mother said, as I recall, "I've been married almost fourteen years and I am thirty-six years old." She added, "For the first time we have a home where my children will have room to play. I am most thankful."

Now I was not especially impressed by her remark about the space we would enjoy because I hadn't been conscious of its lack. But I was so intrigued by the figure 36 that I soon worked out the year in which I would attain her venerability. The result was disheartening. Nineteen twenty-six was ridiculously far off, a whole lifetime in the future.

Possibly, like most boys, I was convinced that life was a flat plateau of assigned tasks, unchanging in monotony and injustice. I suppose, too, that the only peak on my personal horizon would have been something like entering the halls of higher learning (the eighth grade) or bathing in glory (becoming a full-fledged member of the high-school baseball team).

I daydreamed now and then about the highest and remotest peaks of all, fantastically difficult even to contemplate scaling: to be an engineer (there was only one kind), racing across the land, arriving in Abilene, steam engine hissing, bell ringing, once again breaking the record from St. Louis or some other distant, mythical place; or to set down the next three batters on nine pitches in the last half of the ninth, with the bases loaded (of course), to the thunderous applause of five hundred spectators. Certainly I never thought of myself or those about me as makers or participants in any other kind of history.





STARTING off for West Point in June 1911, I traveled light. No boy of my acquaintance had ever been overburdened with an extensive wardrobe, and since all civilian clothes were to be sent home or stored, there was no need for more than a single suitcase.

I took about a week for the trip, stopping off first in Chicago to see a girl named Ruby Norman, who was studying violin at the Chicago Conservatory; then in Ann Arbor, to visit my brother Ed. Ruby and I had been good friends in Abilene and I had been saddened when she went off to the city. We spent a couple of evenings going to the movies and seeing the sights.

Ed, a natural athlete, was just completing his second year at the University of Michigan. He had a job waiting on tables in a vast dining hall, which left him little time for athletics. What was worse, he had suffered a prolonged bout of appendicitis and had dropped from 170 pounds to 150. He did try track and baseball but he never got to play football at Michigan.

While he was finishing his exams, I walked around the campus



and was much impressed. That evening Ed hired a canoe and we set out on the river with a couple of girls. We took along a phonograph and played popular songs. This was the most romantic evening I had ever known. I had a feeling that perhaps I had made a mistake in not joining Ed at Michigan.

THE NEW class of cadet candidates arrived at the Academy before noon on June 14, 1911. My impression of that first day was one of calculated chaos. All day we were shouted at by self-important upperclassmen telling us to pick up clothes, bring in bedding, put our shoulders back, keep our eyes up, and run, run, run. Everything was done on the double. I suppose that if we'd had time to sit down and think for a moment, most of the 285 of us would have taken the next train out. But no one was given much time to think—and when I did it was always, "Where else could you get a college education without cost?"

Toward evening we were sworn in as cadets of the United States Military Academy. When we raised our right hands and repeated the official oath, a feeling came over me that the expression "The United States of America" would henceforth mean something different from what it ever had before. Across half a century, I can look back and see a gawky Kansas boy earnestly repeating the words that would make him a cadet. It was a supreme moment.

THE FIRST three weeks were spent in what has been called, from time immemorial, Beast Barracks. During our three weeks as a Beast the cadet instructors were all over the place, their only mission to torment and persecute us. When we went to the cadet store for supplies, we would be handed a bundle of clothes and bedding that was almost unmanageable. When we went up and down stairs, we had to take the steps two at a time. And because the summer was a hot one, the experience was strenuous, and for those who weren't used to exercise it approached the unendurable. Previous years of working came to my rescue. So did my age—I was nearly twenty-one. At times the whole performance

would strike me as funny, and in the semiprivacy of my room I could laugh a little at myself and at the system.

My roommate, a lad from the same state as myself, told me that when he had received his appointment a celebration had been held in his little town. He left the town a hero—and the contrast of Beast Barracks was too much. Part of his difficulty was that he had come to West Point quite young, only just past seventeen, and had had no experience of taking care of himself or earning any part of his living. My efforts at bucking him up were no help and he left the Academy. I liked him and I think it was only his youth and sheltered existence that defeated him.

Military drill was a problem for me. I had had no training in marching, and to keep in step with the music of the band was difficult. For days I was assigned to the Awkward Squad.

I knew little about the Army, but I did know we were required to salute all officers. I was double-timing down the street one of those first days when I heard a band coming. Before it turned the corner, I encountered the most decorated fellow I had ever seen, so I snapped to attention and presented arms. He did not return the salute. I did it again and a third time. I was mortified to find I had been saluting a drum major.

Beast period over, we were integrated into the corps of cadets, then living in summer camp almost on the banks of the Hudson. We were allowed a choice as to tentmates, and I was fortunate to find in our company Paul A. Hodgson from Wichita. P.A. was a fine athlete and a good student. He devoted every moment he could to improving his academic standing and urged me to do the same. But I was inclined to be easygoing about studies, attaching more importance to sports.

One of my reasons for going to West Point was the hope that I could pursue an athletic career. I was muscular and strong but very spare, five feet eleven and 152 pounds. It was dismaying to find that I was too light in comparison to men who were then on the football team. But the only thing to do was keep at it.

Perhaps in baseball I could hold my own. In high school I had had some reputation as a center fielder, and I was good at bat—

trained by my coach as a "chop hitter," to poke the ball at selected spots in the infield rather than to swing away freely. The West Point coach thought highly of my fielding, but not of this style of hitting. "Practice hitting my way for a year and you'll be on my squad next spring," he said.

THE LIFE of the cadet has been described many times by numerous and better writers. Its most unpleasant aspect during the Plebe, or first, year is the Plebe's awareness that he is considered to be awkward, clumsy, and of unequaled stupidity. But some of us were not above (or beneath) bedeviling superserious upperclassmen in their attempts to make us over. Once we learned that the punishment meted out was usually not of great moment, another Plebe, Tommy Atkins, and I found opportunities to needle our tormentors.

One day, having been found guilty—by a corporal named Adler—of a minor infraction of regulations, we were ordered to report to his room after tattoo that evening in "full-dress coats." This expression signified a complete uniform, but Tommy suggested that we obey the literal language of the order.

The full-dress coat has long tails in back, and is tailored straight across the waist in front. At the appointed time, each of us donned a full-dress coat and, with no other stitch of clothing, marched into the Corporal's room. We saluted and said solemnly, "Sir, Cadets Eisenhower and Atkins report as ordered."

Adler let out the cry of a cougar, while his roommate became convulsed with laughter. Predictably, all the upperclassmen of the Division rushed in to see what was going on. Some of them joined Corporal Adler in reading us out as arrogant, unruly Plebes. They forced us to strain our shoulders back, pull in our stomachs, and assume exaggerated positions of attention. Other visitors just howled with glee.

As time approached for taps everybody had to rush to his own room. As usual, the upperclassman had the last word. Dismissing us, he gave us a new order. "Immediately after taps you will report back in complete uniform including rifles and crossbelts, and

if you miss a single item I'll have you down here every night for a week." After taps we went back, dressed as instructed, to be braced up against the wall until we left our bodily outlines on it in perspiration. But afterward we and the other Plebes had a lot of laughs—quiet ones—out of Adler's temporary discomfiture.

The discipline was not so much harsh as inexorable. Each offense had its prescribed demerits, and if in any month the total exceeded a certain level, the victim was required to "walk the area" during his free hours. Under the watchful eye of an officer or cadet officer, the offender would march up and down, one hour for each excess demerit. Ultimately I was discovered in an offense which caused a change in Academy regulations.

After I became an upperclassman, I went to cadet dances only now and then, preferring to devote my time to poker, in which the debts were recorded for payment after graduation. On one of the rare occasions when I did go to a dance, I met a girl, a professor's daughter, and we started dancing in a way that the authorities felt was not in accord with the sedate repertory of the time. We liked to whirl as rapidly as we could. I suppose this showed a little more of her ankles, possibly even her knees, than was thought seemly. I was warned not to dance that way anymore.

A few months later I met the same girl at a dance, and forgot the warning entirely. Hailed before the Commandant, I was informed that I had not only danced improperly, but had ignored a warning. I was demoted from sergeant to private; my punishment order read: "... and will be confined to the barracks for a month and will during this period walk punishment tours every Wednesday and Sunday afternoon."

At the same time a football injury put me into the hospital for a month, although I could go to classes on crutches. The result was that while I was indeed confined to barracks—the hospital—the injury prevented my walking the area "during this period."

The sharp-eyed Commandant of Cadets realized that I had in effect foiled the purposes of the punishment. Thereafter, such orders read simply: "Cadet \_\_\_\_\_ will be confined for one month to the barracks and will walk twenty-two punishment tours."

Even though an offender might have spent the entire month flat on his back, he would still have those tours to walk after he left the hospital. This is one of those unwilling contributions to the Academy for which no cadet can thank me.

I never fully reformed, and in matters of discipline I was far from a good cadet. I enjoyed life at the Academy, had a good time with my pals, and was undisturbed by a demerit or two, even though these had an effect on class standing.

Thirty or so years later, when I had become Chief of Staff of the Army—a post far higher than my loftiest cadet ambitions—an inquirer, unknown to me, thought that my West Point years might provide a clue to my later performance. Somehow he managed to get photostats of my disciplinary record. The offenses listed on sheet after sheet through four years must have appalled him by their multitude and variety. Eventually these photostats were sent to the White House after I became President, possibly as evidence, someone suggested charitably, that one cannot always read a man's future in the record of his younger days. Among about 162 men in my graduating class, I stood 125th in discipline.

My staggering catalogue of demerits was largely due to a lack of motivation in almost everything other than athletics. I didn't think of myself as a scholar or as a military figure whose career might be damaged by his disciplinary record. I suspect instead that I looked with disfavor on classmates whose days were haunted by fear of demerits and low grades.

In spite of a passion for athletics, my career as a player was short. I was, as mentioned, considered too light to make the football varsity. Although I was promoted to it several times in my first year, I always ended on the scrubs as "too small." During the summer, I practiced hitting the way the baseball coach had suggested, and I worked hard on the running track to improve my speed. I also set up a severe regimen of gymnastics to strengthen my leg and arm muscles. And I indulged my appetite to the limit.

When the 1912 football season started I weighed about 174 extremely solid pounds, and I played in West Point's first practice game. No player was more eager to prove himself and I showed

up quite well. For the first time I attracted the attention of the varsity coaches, headed by Captain Ernest Graves. After the game, I was trotting toward the gymnasium when Captain Graves called sharply, "Eisenhower! Where did you get those pants?"

They were hanging around my ankles. "From the manager, sir."

Turning to the cadet manager, Graves said, "Get this man completely outfitted with proper equipment."

I was as high as a kite. This was the first intimation that I might make the varsity. Thereafter, in no game or practice session could the coaches claim I lacked pugnacity and combativeness, assumed to offset my lack of tonnage. I tried to instill the fear of Eisenhower into every opponent. On one occasion an opposing player shouted to the referee, "Watch that man!" pointing at me.

With some astonishment, the referee asked, "Why? Has he slugged you or roughed you up?"

The man replied, "NO! But he's *going to*."

Until my injury, I was used that year consistently as a varsity player. In the Tufts game, when I was plunging through the line, a man got his hands on my foot. I twisted and threw my weight against it. Although my knee swelled rapidly, there was little pain. I was hospitalized for two or three days, then discharged, with no warning that the joint was permanently weakened and that I should be cautious in using it. A few days later, while taking part in "monkey drill," I leaped off my horse to vault over him as he jumped a low hurdle. The landing shock to my injured knee was more than it could take. I ended on the ground with my leg twisted behind me. Cartilages and tendons were badly torn.

The doctors spent four days straightening my leg, then put it in a cast. When I was released from the hospital and tried to use the leg, I learned to my dismay that rugged sports were denied to me from then on. To this day I have to be careful of that knee.

Homer and his legendary birthplaces cannot hold a candle to the number of Tufts men who say they caused the original injury. At public dinners and ceremonies, men of my own age have approached me, saying, "General, I was the man who inflicted that bad knee on you back in 1912. Wish I hadn't hit you so hard."

Over the years, I must have heard that sort of statement two or three dozen times. I wonder how many men Tufts had on the field when I was hurt?

The end of my career as a football player had a profound effect on me. My exercise was now limited to gymnastics, walking and calisthenics. I was almost despondent and several times had to be prevented from resigning by the persuasive efforts of classmates. I have often wondered why, at that moment, I did not give increased attention to studies. Instead I gave less. Life seemed to have little meaning; a need to excel was almost gone.

I learned to smoke and even in this I managed to be rebellious. Cadets were allowed to smoke pipes or cigars in their rooms, but cigarette smoking brought serious penalties. So I smoked cigarettes. Loose Bull Durham tobacco could be purchased at the cadet store, and I became a "roll your own" smoker.

One day I was asked by one of the better students in the class to come to his room to talk over some piece of business. When I arrived, he was properly uniformed and deep in study. I lounged in, sat down and began to roll a cigarette. Looking up, I saw a horror-stricken face. "Please, Ike, if you must smoke, do it in the hall and we'll talk there."

"Well, I didn't *ask* to come here. You wanted to see me."

"Yes," he said in distress, "but if the Tac (the tactical officer in charge) finds out, it could cost me a file in my class standing and I can't afford it." (A man's initial seniority in the Army follows his class standing at the time of commission.)

I obliged by stepping outside his room, and after listening to what he had to say, I left. I was so engrossed in thinking about his anxiety to avoid a single demerit that I walked out of the barracks with the cigarette lighted. It was a shock, then, to hear the Tac's voice say, "Mr. Eisenhower, put out that cigarette."

"Yes, Sir," I answered ruefully. This was a multiple-demerit offense and I would have to pay the penalty.

Things continued to run downhill. Vivid in my mind is an incident from which I learned the wickedness of arrogance and the embarrassment caused by lack of consideration for others.

There's probably no individual in the world more serenely arrogant than the cadet who has just left the ranks of Plebes to become a lordly Yearling. *He* now has the right to inflict on the incoming Plebes the verbal abuse that he has so much resented in the past year. Like other Yearlings, I did my part. There were standard questions which, voiced as roughly as possible, were intended to crush the Plebe deep into the mire of inferiority. One was, "Mr. Dumbguard (or Dumbjohn), what's your PCS?" (Previous Condition of Servitude or, What did you do before you came to West Point?)

I ran into a young fellow from my own state. Or to be precise, running down the street to carry out someone's orders, he ran into me. I reacted with a bellow of mock indignation. With all the scorn I could muster I demanded, "Mr. Dumbguard, what is your PCS?" And added, "You look like a barber."

He said softly, "I was a barber, Sir."

I didn't have enough sense to apologize on the spot and make a joke of the whole thing. I just turned on my heel and went to my tent where my roommate, P.A. Hodgson, was sitting. I said, "P.A., I'm never going to crawl (correct harshly) another Plebe as long as I live. I've just done something unforgivable. I made a man ashamed of the work he did to earn a living."

And never again, during the remaining three years at the U.S.M.A., did I take it upon myself to crawl a Plebe.

EVERY cadet looked forward to the few furloughs authorized during the four-year course. Neither in frequency nor in duration did the Academy provide the escape enjoyed by other college students. All things are relative, however, and every pressure, every restriction seemed more tolerable because ahead was the prospect of Christmas leave. Every cadet, except the Plebe, if he was not undergoing punishment, if he was completely proficient in his studies and physically fit, was allowed a few days off. In my second, or Yearling, year, there were two matters that prevented my taking Christmas leave. I was in the hospital with my knee, and my disciplinary record was not up to standard.



In 1913 and 1914 I was able to spend the eight-day Christmas leaves away from West Point. It was too short a time for me to go all the way home, so one year I went to Buffalo with a friend, and the next year to New York City. I couldn't have afforded to see the big city if it hadn't been for the Hotel Astor, the New York home of the Cadet Corps. For those who could not pay cash, the Astor carried all bills until graduation day. And then each of us got a twenty-five percent discount on everything except actual money advanced to us by the hotel cashier.

During this leave, I realized that I needed a few presentable civilian ties. I found two that I liked in a haberdashery near the hotel. Allowing for the high prices of New York City, I thought they would cost about \$1.50 each. The salesman wrapped the package and calmly said, "That will be twenty-four dollars."

False pride would not let me say, "I can't afford them." The purchase took just about the last cent I had, and from then on I had to take all my meals in the hotel, where I could sign the bill.

At the end of the second year, West Pointers were given one furlough of about two and a half months. This aroused as much enthusiasm in us as the prospect of graduation. I went back to Abilene to see my family and friends.

DURING the year following my injury the football and medical authorities tried every experiment and exercise they could think of to get me back into condition, but nothing kept the knee from becoming dislocated under strain. Once he knew the struggle was hopeless, Captain Dailey, the new coach, suggested that I try coaching the junior varsity, the squad we called Cullum Hall. This was made up of men of all classes who were not quite good enough to make the first team. I got interested in this idea and did try it; and I was able to send on to the varsity a few performers who made the grade.

The knee that kept me from playing football came close to changing my whole life. As the time neared for graduation I was called to the office of the head of the medical department, Colonel Shaw. Because of my injury, he said, he might have to

recommend that, while I be graduated and receive a diploma, I not be commissioned in the Army.

The Army was small in 1915, its total strength about 120,000, and the graduating class at West Point more than supplied the immediate demand for second lieutenants. The authorities were therefore very careful not to commission anyone with a serious physical difficulty, for his early retirement with disability pension would make him a drain on the government for life.

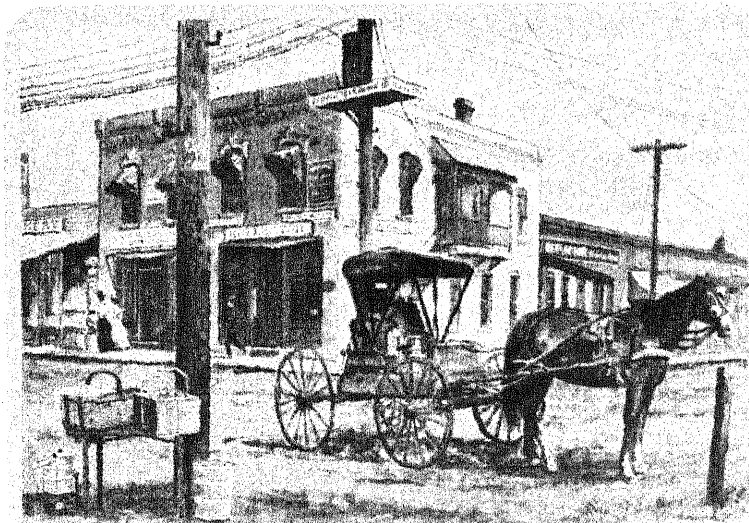
When Colonel Shaw had finished, I said this was all right with me. I remarked that I had always had a curious ambition to go to the Argentine (it sounded to me a little like the Old West) and I might go and see the place and maybe even live there for a few years. He was obviously surprised that I was not more upset. He said he would think over the matter of his recommendation.

Within a few days he sent for me again. He had been going over my record, he said, and had found that my injury had been aggravated by a riding accident. I confirmed this. He said, "Mr. Eisenhower, if you will not submit any requests for mounted service on your preference card, I will recommend to the Academic Board that you be commissioned."

The preference card required each cadet to put down which service of the Army he would like to join. Top-ranking students asked for the Engineers, for promotion came fast there, or for the Field Artillery. The Infantry, Coast Artillery and the Cavalry were available to the lower two-thirds of the class.

I told Colonel Shaw that my choice was the Infantry. "All right," he said, "I'll recommend you for a commission, but with the stipulation that you will ask for no other service in the Army."

In defense of Colonel Shaw and other officers who recommended me for commission, I should put in that my West Point record was not all bad. Perhaps I have overstressed my slight differences with the disciplinary code and the academic life. I had been a coach, a cheerleader, I gave talks to the Corps before games. One report on my early performance even said—it was shown to me years later—that I was "born to command." The man who wrote that was a reckless prophet.



IN THE ABILENE YEARS

*Sauce for the gander.*

MY EARLIEST memory involves an incident that occurred just before my fifth birthday. My mother's sister, Aunt Minnie, had been staying with us in Abilene—we lived in a cottage on Second Street then—and she took me back with her to Topeka for a visit. There was the train, and then a long horse-and-buggy ride to my relatives' farm. I remember looking down through the floorboards, watching the ground rush past under the horses' feet.

When we arrived, it seemed that there were dozens of grown-ups in the house. Even though they were, somehow, my family, I felt lonesome and lost among them and I began to wander around outside.

In the rear of the house was a pair of barnyard geese. The male had no intention of permitting me to penetrate his domain. Each time he saw me he would push along toward me with such a hideous hissing that my five-year-old courage couldn't stand the

strain. I would race for the house, burst into the kitchen and tell any available elder about this awful old gander.

After several such skirmishes, Uncle Luther decided that something had to be done. He took an old broom and cut off all the straw, leaving a short, hard knob. He showed me how to swing the weapon, then took me out and announced that I was on my own. More frightened at the moment of my uncle's possible scolding than of the gander's aggression, I took what was meant to be a firm, but was really a trembling stand next time the fowl came close. Then I let out a yell and rushed toward him, swinging the club. He turned and I gave him a satisfying smack right on the fanny. He let out a squawk and ran off. From then on I was the proud boss of the backyard. I had learned never to negotiate with an adversary except from a position of strength.

MOTHER and Father maintained a genuine partnership in raising their six sons. Father was breadwinner, Supreme Court and Lord High Executioner. Mother was tutor and manager of our household. This may sound unbelievable, but I never heard a cross word pass between them. Before their children they were not demonstrative in their love for each other, but a quiet mutual devotion permeated our home. This had a lasting effect on us all.

Father had been given a sizable farm as a wedding present by his father, but he so disliked farming that he had sold it to buy a partnership in a store. For a time all went well, but one year drought and an invasion of grasshoppers ruined the crops of Dickinson County, Kansas. Father continued to extend credit; he carried the farmers to the end. Then his partner proved too weak to face the store's own creditors, so he took what little cash was left and departed one night for parts unknown. My parents never heard from him again.

Father set out at once to find any kind of job, and patiently started to pay off his former suppliers. He accomplished this in a relatively few years, but the experience left its mark. He had an obsession against owing anyone a nickel. He would allow the family no charge accounts—cash was paid or nothing was bought.

The first of these jobs was in Denison, Texas, where I was born. My brothers, older and younger, were all born in Dickinson County, to which we returned when I was less than two years old. There, Father was an engineer in a creamery, later manager of a gas plant, and finally director of employe savings for a group of public utilities. Usually, the work was hard, the pay meager. Father would work six days a week, leaving the house about 6:30 a.m. and returning about 5:00 p.m. Family life revolved around him. School, chores, meals and all other activities had to be adjusted to meet his requirements.

My mother, for all her gentleness, was outraged by the injustice of that early business catastrophe. For years she studied law at home, hoping someday to take legal action against the absconder, and she never ceased to warn her sons against embezzlers, chiselers and all kinds of crooks.

Her household problems were, I realize now, monumental. The least of them was to provide comfortable beds for six boys in three rooms. She skillfully assigned us to beds in such a pattern as to minimize the incidence of nightly fights. She rotated our duties so that each son learned all the responsibilities of running the house: helping with the cooking, dishwashing and laundry; pruning the orchard, harvesting the fruit and storing it for the winter; hoeing the corn and weeding the vegetable garden; putting up the hay; feeding the chickens and milking the cow. The task of making life happy and meaningful for a family of eight took insight, imagination and managerial skill.

Mother rarely resorted to corporal punishment, and when she did it was usually a slap on the hand with a ruler. She deeply believed in self-discipline. According to her, we should behave properly not through fear of punishment but because it was the right thing to do. Any serious infraction was passed along to Father, who was never one for sparing the rod. If the evidence showed that the culprit had offended deliberately, the application of stick to skin was a routine affair. Father had quick judicial instincts. Mother had insight into the fact that each son was a unique personality and she adapted her methods to each.

ARTHUR, THE FIRSTBORN, gave my parents little trouble. He was studious, ambitious and, to me, four years younger, he seemed a man-about-town. While he had his share of tussles with the rest of us, it is my impression that he was the best behaved. Following high school, he took a course in a local business college and went on to become a successful banker in Kansas City.

Edgar, second in line, was a natural athlete. He was two years older than I, and, though for years we were almost the same size, his superior qualities always made him the victor in our inevitable personal battles. Being a stubborn sort myself, I was determined to get even for his arm twists and toeholds. But not until I returned from West Point for my vacation in 1913 did I send him an all-inclusive challenge—anything he wanted, wrestling, boxing (bare-fisted or with gloves) or plain rough-and-tumble. Even then he got the best of me. In his reply from wherever his summer job had taken him, he wrote, "I would be glad to meet you with boxing gloves at forty paces." As he did not come home that season I was robbed of sweet revenge.

One of Ed's qualities I admired most was shown one day when we were digging a cistern together. I was using an adze and I brought it down neatly through the side of his foot. It had to hurt, but Ed's shouted exclamation was, "Oh Dwight! Clean through my new twenty-five-cent socks!"

Because Ed and I were constantly paired off, and Earl and Milton were much younger than he, Roy, the fourth son, was a bit of a lone wolf. Like Arthur, he had no interest in going to college. He began working in a drugstore even before he entered high school, and was soon the youngest registered pharmacist in Kansas. Eventually he purchased a drugstore in Junction City and did a thriving business.

Earl and Milton, only eighteen months apart, became the other set of natural partners. Earl, blind in his left eye because of an accident at the age of four, and Milton, left weakened by an attack of scarlet fever, did not enjoy as robust and disreputable a boyhood as Ed and I. Milton turned his energies more to studies and to the arts, particularly the piano. He organized a dance band

which helped provide him with funds for college. One of his teachers headed him to newspaper work, which eventually led him to careers in government and higher education.

In appearance, we shared strong family characteristics but, since my father was dark and swarthy and my mother a golden blonde, there were predictable differences. Arthur and Roy were dark, Ed's and Milton's hair was chestnut-colored. I was so light that I was often dubbed "The Swede" by opponents in intercity athletics, while Earl was a fiery redhead.

Both parents were against quarreling and fighting, and deplored bad manners. However, I discovered that my father was far from being a turn-the-other-cheek type. One afternoon I came in from school on the run, chased by a belligerent boy of about my own size. My father called, "Why do you let that boy run you around like that?"

Instantly I shouted back, "Because if I fight him, you'll give me a whipping, whether I win or lose!"

"Chase that boy out of here."

This was enough for me. I turned around, and it was the suddenness of my counterattack rather than any fighting prowess that startled my tormentor, who took off at a rapid pace. I caught him, threw him down and promised to give him a thrashing every day unless he let me alone. I was rapidly learning that domination of others often comes about through bluff.

In spite of boyish frictions, the household and even life outside was exceptionally happy. Though our family was far from affluent, I never heard a word even distantly related to self-pity. If we were poor—and I'm not sure that we were by the standards of the day—we were unaware of it. We were always well fed and adequately clothed and housed. Each boy was permitted to earn his own money and to spend it according to his taste. One way to obtain cash was to raise and sell vegetables. Another was to get a summer job, or to work in a store after school.

From the beginning of our schooling, Mother and Father encouraged us to go to college. They said constantly, "Anyone who really wants an education can get it." But my father, remember-

ing that he didn't become a farmer as his father had hoped, scrupulously refrained from suggesting courses of study.

His emphasis on college recalls one incident that I then looked on as almost tragic. Edgar decided, early in his high-school days, to follow Arthur's example and earn money rather than go on in school. For some months he pretended he was going to school while he worked, instead, for the town doctor. One day his continued absence was reported to Father. I never before or after saw Father so angry.

At noontime that day, Edgar and I had come home for lunch and Father, on a surprise visit from the creamery, found us in the barn. His face was black as thunder. With no pause for argument, he reached for a piece of harness, at the same time grabbing Ed by the collar. He started in.

A little over twelve at the time, I shouted to my father to stop. Finally I began to cry as loudly as I could, possibly hoping that Mother would arrive on the scene.

When I came up behind him and tried to catch hold of his arms, Father stopped his thrashing and turned on me. "Oh, do you want some of the same? What's the matter with you, anyway?"

"I don't think anyone ought to be whipped like that," I said, "not even a dog." Whatever his reason, I suffered no punishment.

Now I know, and I am sure Ed does too, that only through instant and drastic action could my father have persuaded him, a headstrong fellow, to change his attitude toward school. Had it not been for the application of leather, prolonged and unforgettable, my brother might well have become an unhappy handyman in Kansas.

In the end, Father's desire for his sons' education was fulfilled by four of them. Ed decided to go to Michigan to study law. All the younger brothers sent him funds on occasion, but he worked at the University and essentially financed his own education. My admission to West Point assured an education for me with no drain on household finances. Ed, remembering the help he had received, financed Earl at the University of Washington. Milton, by writing for magazines, correcting English papers, and, as I



said, playing in a dance band, paid his costs at Kansas State University and later, in 1924, while an American Vice-Consul in Scotland, did graduate work at the University of Edinburgh.

This willingness of brothers to aid each other was one consequence of the guidance we received as youngsters. Years later, when Arthur was an authority on grain marketing, finance and banking, Edgar a successful lawyer and director of industrial companies, Earl a radio-station owner and public-relations director of the community newspaper, Milton the President of Johns Hopkins University and I a first-administration Republican President, friends often asked why there had not been a black sheep in the family.

The answer lies, I think, in the fact that our family life was free from parental quarreling and filled with genuine love. I never knew anyone from a divorced family until I went to West Point. Responsibility came as a part of maturing. Concern for others was natural in our small community. And ambition without arrogance was quietly instilled in us by both parents. Part of that ambition was self-dependence. Whenever any of us expressed a wish for something that seemed far beyond our reach, my mother often said, "Sink or swim," or "Survive or perish."

One other circumstance helped our character development: we were needed. I often think today of what a difference it would make if children believed they were *contributing* to a family's survival and happiness. In the transformation from a rural to an urban society, children are robbed of the opportunity to do genuinely responsible work.

### *The key to the door*

My first reading love was ancient history. At an early age, I developed an interest in the human record and I became particularly fond of Greek and Roman accounts. These subjects were so engrossing that I was frequently guilty of neglecting all others. My mother's annoyance at this indifference to the mundane life

of chores and assigned homework grew until, despite her reverence for books, she locked my volumes of history in a closet. This had the desired effect for a while—until I found the key to the closet. Then, whenever Mother was somewhere else, I would sneak out the books. To this day, there are many unrelated bits of information about Greece and Rome that stick in my memory.

Among all the figures of antiquity, Hannibal was my favorite. This bias came about because I read one day that no account of Carthaginian history was ever written by a friendly hand. Everything we know about Carthage, about Hamilcar and his lion's brood—of which Hannibal was one—was written by an enemy. For a great man to come down through history with his only biographers in the opposite camp is a considerable achievement. Since those early years, history of all kinds, including historical novels if they are well documented, has always intrigued me mightily. And the campaigns of the more modern leaders—Frederick, Napoleon, Gustavus Adolphus, and all of our prominent American soldiers and statesmen—I have found absorbing.

Among the Americans, Washington was my hero. I never tired of reading about his exploits, particularly at Valley Forge, and I conceived an almost violent hatred of General Conway and his Cabal. I could not imagine anyone so stupid and so unpatriotic as to have wanted to remove Washington from command of the Army. His stamina and patience in adversity, first, and then his indomitable courage, daring, and capacity for self-sacrifice excited my admiration. While the cherry-tree story may be pure legend, Washington's Farewell Address, his counsels to his countrymen, like the speech at Newburgh to the rebellious officers of his Army, exemplified the human qualities I frankly idolized.

I know now that as a youngster I was concerned almost exclusively with the peaks and promontories of the historical terrain. Today I am interested too in what ordinary people, from age to age, moved by dissatisfaction with the inadequate, have done to accelerate the spiral of change.

But, as to the future, any predictions of mine might be as wrong as Cecelia Curry's, who wrote the class prophecy about her fel-

low Abilene High School graduates of 1909. My brother Edgar, she wrote—as though in a newspaper of the 1940s—is finishing his second term as President of the United States, might be elected to a third. And what, in 1940, has become of Dwight? “He’s professor of history at Yale”!

For me, in Abilene days, the reading of history was an end in itself, not a source of lessons for the present or future. Nor was I aware that the richness of opportunity in this country would give me, like all of us, a chance to be joined, intimately and productively, with both the past and future of the Republic. Had one of Abilene’s many Civil War veterans, for instance, suggested that not many years later I would visit Gettysburg to study the tactics of the great battlefield where he had fought, my reaction would have been—“Me?”

Yet so it came to pass in 1915. Three years later I was in Gettysburg again, as the commander of an Army camp. And in 1950 I bought property next to the fields where Pickett’s men had assembled for the assault on Cemetery Ridge.

To the rapid reader or the hasty visitor, Gettysburg is Pickett’s Charge, Little Round Top and Devil’s Den, the Wheatfield and the Peach Orchard, plus a few names in high command. Everything else is a blur. This is understandable. To tell the whole story, in detail, has required enough books to fill a small library.

Nearly 170,000 men were engaged, from scores of regiments. Of course, major decisions were the responsibility of a few. But their execution depended on the initiative, the fidelity, the strength of many thousands of individuals known only to their immediate comrades in the battle, their names forgotten today.

Gettysburg, in fact, was a demonstration of what a small portion of a nation’s number can accomplish in the shaping and the making of history. On the field, men found in themselves resources of courage, of leadership, of greatness they had not known before. Nor were they men of only physical courage. High moral courage marked them, too. Take one example.

George Gordon Meade was assigned command of the Army of the Potomac only three days before the Battle of Gettysburg com-

menced. No other officer in that war was given so little time to prepare himself and his troops for such a climactic engagement. As he rode toward the battle on July 1, 1863, he received reports throughout the afternoon and evening that his I Corps had been forced back, its commanding general killed, the XI Corps disastrously routed and thousands of its men taken prisoner. Meade must have been torn with anxiety about the future of his army and—for he was only human—occasionally must have worried about his own fate as its commander. For a year and a half, command of the Army of the Potomac had been an avenue to military disgrace: Meade's appointment was only one in a long succession of changes.

When he reached the field after midnight on the eve of the second day of battle, the prospect was far from heartening. The Confederates—except on the south—were ringing the Union lines, and all reports indicated that Lee would be ready in the morning for a heavy assault on the Union position. It might be late in the day before Meade would have enough troops on the field to balance Confederate strength.

The morning of July 2, after only a few hours' sleep, he was back on the lines. As he scrutinized from Cemetery Hill the terrain around him occupied by the enemy, he had to weigh the value of the ridges held by his men against the offensive capacity of Lee's victory-heartened veterans; to calculate the hours required to move in his reserves; to formulate in his mind moves that might thwart the plans of Lee.

For Meade, this was the moment when all within him had to bear tough and strong on the problem ahead. No council of war could be called. No delay for leisurely study would be permitted by Lee. And the decision was solely Meade's responsibility. He is quoted as saying, almost to himself, as he turned his horse: "We may fight it out here just as well as anywhere else."

In all this, there is neither visible drama nor glamour; only the loneliness of one man on whose mind weighed the fate of ninety thousand comrades and of the Republic they served. Meade's claim to greatness in that moment may be best evidenced by the

total absence of the theatrical. When thousands of lives were at stake there was no time for postures or declamations.

And I plead for realization that the handful of heroes on a field such as Gettysburg merely symbolizes the courage or the daring or the high-spirited initiative of a multitude of men. Men such as these are worthy of every American's study. Thousands upon thousands of them, totally unknown to formal history, have performed as gloriously.

*Those I came from*

THE YEAR I was ten, my mother gave permission to Arthur and Edgar, my older brothers, to go out Halloween "trick-or-treating." It was upsetting when my father and mother said I was too young to go along. I argued and pleaded until the last minute. Finally, the two boys took off.

I have no exact memory of what happened immediately afterward, but suddenly my father was grabbing my shoulders to shock me into consciousness. Completely beside myself, I had been pounding an apple tree with my bleeding fists. My father legislated the matter with the traditional hickory switch and sent me off to bed.

Perhaps an hour later, my mother came into my room. I was still sobbing into the pillow, at odds with the entire world. Mother sat in the rocking chair by the bed and said nothing for a long time. Then she began to talk about temper and controlling it. As she often did, she drew on the Bible, paraphrasing, I suppose, "He that conquereth his own soul is greater than he who taketh a city." Hatred was a futile sort of thing, she said, and as she bandaged my injured hands, she did not fail to make the point that I had expressed resentment and damaged only myself. She added that among all her boys, I was the one who had most to learn.

I have always looked back on that conversation as one of the most valuable moments in my life. The incident was never mentioned again. But to this day I make it a practice to avoid hating

anyone. If someone has acted despicably, especially toward me, I try to forget him. I used to follow a custom—somewhat contrived, I admit—of writing the man's name on a piece of scrap paper, dropping it into the lowest drawer of my desk, and saying to myself, That finishes the incident, and so far as I'm concerned, that fellow.

Eventually, out of my mother's talk grew my habit of not mentioning in public the name of anybody to whose actions or words I took violent exception. In private, of course, I have not always exercised tight control on temper or tongue. My staff has always held up under these bursts with an attitude of cheerful resignation. A quick explosion, as quickly forgotten, can sometimes be a necessary safety valve. I think my mother might have agreed.

My good fortune has been a lifetime of continuous association with widely different men and women who, sometimes in a few minutes by word of mouth, or sometimes over the years by their example, have given me encouragement or helped me to prepare. My parents were first among them.

My great-great-great-grandfather, Hans Nicholas Eisenhauer (Eisenhower)\* was born in the Palatinate in 1691, and came to this country in 1741 with three sons. Peter was twenty-five, John and Martin were in their early teens. They settled in what is now Bethel Township, Lebanon County, Pennsylvania, where Hans farmed for the next twenty years.

During the Revolutionary War, the Susquehanna River territory where they lived was relatively free from armed conflict, though foraging parties undoubtedly made frequent requisitions on the farmers' barns and larders. Food for the troops and fodder for the horses often worried commanders more than the presence of the enemy. There is a small family sidelight on the supply problem. According to the New York Sons of the Revolution, two of

\* The name Eisenhower translates roughly as "iron-hewer." Eisenschmidt could mean blacksmith, but an Eisenhower was something of an artist in iron, a man who literally hewed metal into useful and ornamental shapes, such as armor, weapons, etc.

the Eisenhowers, coming to camp to enlist, got special mention in a report because they brought with them "a supply of food."

I am directly descended from Hans Nicholas' oldest son, Peter, who was the father of seventeen children. A farmer, engaged in many land deals, he was also a blacksmith, a gunsmith, a merchant and, for a time at least, a constable. The raising of a large family, I suppose, required unusual efforts in moneymaking.

Peter's youngest son, Frederick, was my great-grandfather. He was a farmer and weaver who lived until 1884 and was the senior Eisenhower in the move from Pennsylvania to Kansas. His son, Jacob Frederick, my grandfather, was born September 19, 1826. In Jacob's person—he lived with us in Abilene from the time I was ten until I was almost sixteen—the long past of my family grew closer.

I never knew Rebecca Matter Eisenhower, my grandmother. Born in 1825, she was the great-granddaughter of a Revolutionary War soldier, and the daughter of a War of 1812 captain. She died four months before I was born. She and my grandfather had fourteen children, of whom five sons and one daughter died in infancy or childhood. A second daughter, who would have been my Aunt Lydia, was a little over seventeen when death took her. My grandparents' faith, in the face of repeated personal tragedy, is evident on the limestone marker they placed at the head of Lydia's grave:

*She gave her heart to Jesus  
Who took her stains away  
And now in Christ Believ  
ing, the Father too can say*

*I'm going home to glory  
A golden crown to wear  
O meet me meet me over there*

Everything I ever heard about them corroborates the sincerity of these chiseled words. The future life was of paramount importance. This life was only a preparation, the earth a place where

heavenly reward might be earned. Frugal in worldly things, a minister who gave more than a tithe to the church, my grandfather nevertheless had his practical side. He was a good and far-sighted steward of the land, and the valley farm he bought on the edge of Elizabethtown in Pennsylvania's Lykens Valley was ideally situated for bountiful harvests. The house my grandfather built there, more than one hundred and ten years ago, still stands today.

Among the Plain People of Pennsylvania, a strong prejudice existed against any practice that implied a lack of trust in God, and I have read that insurance was barred among them. Grandfather evidently did not consider an insurance policy a reflection on Providence. Within a few weeks of completing his home, at the age of twenty-eight, he had it insured for \$1367 (against an appraised value of \$2050) with the Lykens Valley Mutual Fire Insurance Company. Still, Jacob Eisenhower was a cautious man. His was the forty-eighth policy issued by that company. He waited until the founder and the president of the company took out, respectively, policies forty-six and forty-seven.

In that house my father was born and lived until he was fifteen. He grew up to detest farming, despite the attractiveness of the homestead. But Grandfather prospered. By 1870, his farm was appraised at \$13,000 and his personal property, including savings, at \$6000. He could easily have spent his declining years in that comfortable house in the valley he knew so well. In the seventies, however, among the River Brethren of the Susquehanna Valley, tales were told of the richness of Kansas lands, of the bountiful wheat crops, of good acreage that could be bought at fairly low prices. Pennsylvania newspapers were full of stories about the success of Pennsylvanians who had gone west. The railroad vigorously pushed travel to Kansas by running excursion trains and cutting fares.

My family took the train and arrived in Abilene, county seat of Dickinson County, on April 12, 1878. There Grandfather bought land priced at \$1200 a quarter section, or \$7.50 an acre. (In Pennsylvania, his farm had sold for close to \$175 an acre.) How



much he took up, I do not know. It must have been a substantial amount because his customary wedding gift to his children was a quarter section from the land he owned and \$2000 in cash. He himself, a year after arriving in Kansas, was farming 160 acres.

That was a bad crop year in Kansas, and worse were to come. Moreover, Grandfather had not yet learned how best to cultivate soil so different from his limestone valley in Pennsylvania. But unlike most of his neighbors, he had two strings to his farming bow—and the second was a dairy herd and poultry.

In 1879, his butter production was a full thousand pounds, more than six times the Dickinson County average. And Grandmother that year had gathered 300 dozen eggs, twice the county average. The estimated value of all production was \$400. This was \$85 less than average farm income in the county, but most of their neighbors had already been on their land five or six years.

In my memory, Grandfather is a patriarchal figure, dressed in black, wearing an underbeard with upper lip shaved clean. When I knew him he was retired and lived across the valley from our home. He kept a horse and buggy which, on occasion, he shared with us boys. His importance, in my mind then, rested on the beard and the buggy and the horse. Now I know otherwise.

My grandfather was more than fifty years old when he determined to take his family and leave the pleasant valley where he had lived a half century. This was, I would guess, the great adventure of his life—to risk all he possessed to start a new life on a new kind of ground.

For all his vision, he had no reason to think that a century and a quarter after he was born, his grandson would return to the Susquehanna Valley hoping to end his days on a Pennsylvania farm. Just that has come to pass. Only a few score miles separate my barn from his, still standing in the Lykens Valley.

Of my mother's family, I know less than of my father's, but if Ida Stover was representative of them all, they were a remarkable people. I may exhibit a son's prejudice, but my feeling reflects the affection and respect of all who knew her.

Mother's serenity, her open smile, her gentleness with all and her tolerance of their ways, despite an inflexible loyalty to her religious convictions and her own strict pattern of personal conduct, made a visit with her memorable even for a stranger. And for her sons, privileged to spend a boyhood in her company, the memories are indelible.

My mother was born close to the clamor of battle. Growing up, she could see its ravages in a devastated land and in broken bodies. If her hatred of war arose out of childhood memories, she had justification. She was born May 1, 1862, at Mount Sidney, Virginia, ten miles or so from Staunton in the Shenandoah Valley. Through the first three years of the Civil War, the valley above and below Mount Sidney was a secure highway for the movement of Confederate troops and supplies, and a rich granary that supported Lee's armies. To end all this became a fundamental purpose in Washington. When my mother was well into her third year, Sheridan, detached for the purpose from Grant's forces near Richmond, waged in the valley with fire and sword a campaign so devastating that "a crow flying over it would have to carry its own rations."

Mother grew up among the charred ruins of homes and barns, the decaying trees and blackened soil of uprooted orchards and burned fields, wrecked bridges and twisted railways. She was all her life a woman of peace.

Her mother died when Mother was not quite five. Because her father was unable to cope with eleven children, Mother lived in the home of her maternal grandfather, William Link, who became her guardian upon the death of her father. When she was about fifteen, two of her older brothers moved to Kansas, and she decided that eventually she would join them there.

In an age when, far more than now, most girls looked forward to careers as housewives, Mother was determined to get a good education before all else. This she did and very much on her own, using a small inheritance to see her through high school. To earn money for college, she taught school. In 1883 she left Virginia for Leocompton, Kansas, where she enrolled in Lane University.

Lane had several advantages. It was fairly new. It was lively. And, though she didn't know it, the man who was to be my father was enrolled there. And she could never have imagined that she would be staying in Kansas to help in the total education of this man's sons.

### *The "Gem" on the Plains*

As it must to all small boys, there came a time when we began to comprehend that home was more than just our own backyard. Once in a while, news of the outside world crept in—a world beyond the limits of Kansas, even.

During the Spanish-American War, when I was seven, my uncle Abraham Lincoln Eisenhower was an avid seeker of news. Because he was busy in his veterinary practice, my job, at a penny a day, was to run uptown and get him the local paper, hot off the press. I can never forget his glee when the news came of Dewey's May Day victory over the Spanish fleet at Manila Bay; and he fairly danced with pleasure at word that the Spanish fleet in Cuba had been sunk to the last vessel—a somewhat blood-thirsty reaction for a man who would later become a minister.

But before I paid much attention to that distant, outside world, there was a lot to see and learn in the small world around me. Visually, Abilene was undistinguishable from scores of other rural towns that dotted the plains. It looked peaceful, pastoral, and was, at least in my childhood, happy. After all, the splendiferous C. W. Parker Circus made Abilene its home base. Merry-go-rounds were *built* there. Three decades earlier, though, as "the Cow Capital of the World," it was known as the toughest, meanest, most murderous town of the territory.

Texas cattlemen, after the Civil War, sought eastern markets. In 1869 they started to drive their herds into Abilene, then the western terminus of the Kansas Pacific (later the Union Pacific) Railway. Our national folk heroes were a fairly riotous breed in the best of times, and cowboys coming in off the long, lonely trails

were starved for drink and excitement. It has been written that early Abilene's infamous Texas Street was "a glowing thoroughfare which led from the dreariness of the open prairies into the delight of hell itself." Whether or not the local hell was an unqualified delight, when the railroad moved on westward along about 1872, the citizens were pleased, and settled down into occupations that made for a slower but steadier growth. In many American towns of that period, civic pride was the most flourishing local industry, and when my dad and mother arrived, Abilene was enthusiastic about its future. On my desk lies a booklet printed in 1887, that proclaims Abilene, modestly:

A GEM  
"The City of the Plains"  
THE CENTER OF THE "GOLDEN BELT"

The unknown author writes in bountiful language about the wonders of Kansas, of the county, and of the county seat. That the reader may not think him extravagant in his appraisal, he submits in corroboration an extract from the *Kansas City Journal*:

But whence this wealth . . . Whence these farms in Dickinson County, worth \$10,000,000, and the wealth in stock, factories, business blocks, homes, railroads, salt wells, gypsum beds, etc., to the amount of \$15,000,000—nearly \$1,000 for every man, woman and child in the county? The answer is easy. They have industriously tilled this great garden of nature and its enormous product has been most widely disposed of by a progressive people.

In a final burst of civic puffery, the pamphlet's author, surely one of the progressive people to whom he refers, calls for ten thousand more citizens. "Abilene," he concludes, "is ready for any class of enterprising people to reap a rich reward from . . . a land favored of heaven and embellished by art." Whatever its endowments from heaven, and its cultural wonders, Abilene did not get ten thousand more citizens. Through my boyhood, it was definitely a small town.

It was located a mile or two north of the Smoky Hill River, and east of a slow-moving stream known as Mud Creek. Boys searching for fishing holes in the little waterway had to be content with a mud cat or an occasional channel cat, the latter always a prize. Our major amusements were baseball and football. When I grew older, we had a boxing club in the back of a printshop. Winter sports were skating and hooking a sled behind a horse; the rider, lying flat on his belly, took a fair amount of snow from the horses' hoofs. I remember seeing a tennis court but not seeing anyone play. I had never heard of golf.

Social life was centered in the churches. Church picnics, usually held on the riverbank, were an opportunity to gorge on fried chicken, potato salad and apple pie. The men pitched horse-shoes, the women knitted and talked, and the youngsters fished.

High-school students formed little clubs, but Ed and I never joined. By the time I was old enough to be a member, I was gangly and awkward, with few of the social graces. Probably I was more than happy that I was never invited to membership. My brother and I referred with immense disdain to boys and girls who did belong.

The streets were unpaved, the sidewalks made of lumber, and the police force was one man, Henny Engle. He spent most nights watching trains go by or come in, inspecting the arriving passengers for dubious characters. There was also a town marshal, a daytime man. I never saw him do more than chase truant boys.

Shopping was not a recreation, as it has since become for me. Grocery stores, meat markets, "notion" stores, drugstores provided customers only with what they needed. Nothing was done to encourage the casual browser, the one who these days leaves a store freighted with things he had no intention of buying when he entered. That is just the sort of shopper I am, made for modern merchandising techniques. For me a supermarket is an oriental bazaar, a wonderland of bargains I cannot pass by.

My underground global reputation, I understand, is for the enthusiasm with which I storm a market. A few years ago when Mamie and I were at Culzean Castle, Scotland, a friend and I

visited a clothing shop in Ayr. After we left, loaded down, a clerk went up to the proprietor. "You mean to tell me," he said, "that he was the man who used to be the American President? Why, mon, he acted like a lad from the hills!" Then he added, under his breath, "He's no a hard one to sell, that one. . . ."

No Abilene clerk or store owner would have radiated such pleasure when speaking of any of the Eisenhower boys. When it meant handing over hard-earned spending money, the canny Scots of Ayr could not hold a candle to us in our critical scrutiny of goods and prices. Not that we were taught to love money; far from it. We had a firm respect for it as a commodity hard to come by and quick to vanish unless one exercised vigilant care.

Prices were low but not low enough to suit us. The Abilene paper of October 14, 1890, the day I was born, offers a sample of the price structure. Eggs were five cents a dozen. Bread was three cents a loaf. A man could buy a suit for a few dollars. Boys, however, required bats, balls and mitts, powder and shot for muzzle-loading guns, footballs and helmets, and there was no money to spare for these.

Understanding our wants, Father allotted each boy a bit of ground where he was privileged to raise whatever he chose, to sell if possible to the neighbors. I chose sweet corn and cucumbers; I charged twenty-five cents a dozen for the earliest corn, and as the season advanced, the price went down. Having fixed my price, I would show the corn. If the customers said the price was too high, I would pick up my pack and go on my way.

Then I had another idea. In Texas, Mother had learned to make Mexican hot tamales. They were delicious, and I badgered her until she taught me the whole process, step by step. And I started making and selling tamales, three for five cents. It was a good off-season sales idea, and if there were leftovers, my brothers and I could consume them without strain.

THESE moneymaking ventures began only after we had moved from Second Street to our larger, permanent home on Fourth Street. The Second Street house was tiny, its yard large enough

to swing a cat in if it were a small one. Mother must have wanted more room inside and out; and if ever she gave in to envy, it could have been inspired by the Fourth Street house of my Uncle Abraham, whose veterinary practice required a large barn and open acres around it.

In his boyhood on the family farm in Pennsylvania, Uncle Abe had loved horses more than the land. After his marriage, he had opened a veterinary office and hung out a shingle that read A. L. EISENHOWER, D.V.S. So far as anyone knows, the three letters after his name were self-conferred, although he had served an apprenticeship to a vet. But what he lacked in credentials, he made up for in energy and showmanship. Whenever his time was not occupied by animal care, he would hitch up his horse to a two-wheeled gig and drive hurriedly around the countryside, giving farmers the impression that he was rushing off to answer another emergency call. His practice increased gratifyingly, and he came to be known as the "genial veterinarian."

Then in 1898 he decided suddenly to follow the example of his father and be a preacher of the gospel. He made up his mind to go west, so Father offered to buy his house.

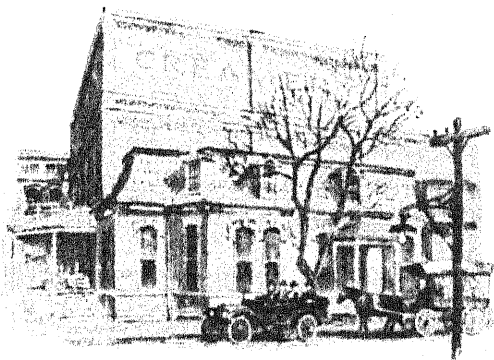
The move to Fourth Street was a step up in the world! There were two fairly large bedrooms upstairs with a miniature bedroom at the end of the hall. One large one was occupied by Father and Mother, with the baby, Earl, in a cradle. In the adjoining room, Roy and I slept in one bed, Edgar in the other. Arthur, the eldest, was awarded the little room—only six and a half feet square. He was the only person with a room of his own. Then Mother brought in a girl to help with the housework, and Arthur had to come in with the rest of us.

I don't know how my mother jammed us all in. A quick calculation reveals that her domain—for living, sleeping, working—totaled 818 square feet for a household of eight. Yet she used the space beautifully. Whenever, since, I've been given any choice of working quarters, my preference as to size may have reflected a subconscious effort to test my own capacity to use space against hers. But I haven't always been a free agent. As Chief of Staff

after World War II, my office in the Pentagon was bigger than the whole house in Abilene. And in my last job, I had no say in the matter whatever.

The first addition to the house was a two-room wing, built when Grandfather Jacob came to live with us, and when the last baby, Milton, was born. With Grandfather's arrival, and without counting the baby, Mother never had less than eight people for breakfast and supper.

Dad carried a lunch or one of us took a hot midday meal to him. The creamery, where he was working then, was far enough



away to make it worthwhile to hitch old Dick to the buggy or ride him bareback. Either way, and for good reason, dispatch and promptness marked the deliveries. One day Ed dismounted to play a little baseball, and Father had to wait past the lunch hour for a meal that was lukewarm. Ed did not have to wait as long to get a very distinct physical reaction.

All in all, we were a cheerful and a vital family. Our pleasures were simple, but we had plenty of fresh air, exercise and companionship. And in that golden time I had my first experience in a political campaign. I know some people have always thought I wasn't much interested in politics, but my debut took place in 1896. Almost everybody in school had a bright yellow McKinley button, because there were few Democrats in the region.



One evening we learned that a big torchlight parade was to take place. Because I was only six, my mother was loath for me to go to it, but Arthur, now a lordly ten, and Ed, eight, assured her that they would take care of me, and we went up to the north end where the parade was to start. The torches were intriguing, each consisting of a rod with a can of liquid at the end, and a wick that threw a smoky flame into the evening air. It soon became clear that there were more torches than bearers, so, spying us standing there wide-eyed, the parade managers commanded us to come over. Each of us was handed a torch, and mine was exactly my own height. We were told to shoulder torches, somewhat like shouldering arms; then off we went.

The town band was supposed to keep us marching in cadence, but my short legs presented a problem and our group at the end of the parade was more like a cavorting crowd of lambs. There was a certain amount of disrespectful laughter, but we got through the parade with no singed hair and without undoing McKinley. That was not only my first appearance in parade formation but my first successful venture into politics. It was half a century later that I was drawn into my next campaign.

IN THE fall of that year, 1896, I entered the Lincoln School, unaware that I was starting a formal education which would not terminate until 1929 when I finished courses at the Army's War College in Washington, D.C. Into that third of a century was to be compressed a series of revolutions—political and economic, social and scientific—which were to transform the human environment of the entire globe. But nothing could have been more revolutionary to me than this new experience. Here I was, transported from the family circle into an immense brick building populated by strangers of varying ages. This upheaval was far more cataclysmic than any changes to follow.

They used a drum to rally us in ranks for reentering the school after playtime. The drummer could turn the tumult of a recess crowd into some semblance of orderly movement. I've always admired the drum since then, and despised the siren. The drum

communicates a message and calms as it warns. The siren is an assault on the senses. In later years, when well-intentioned escorts elected to use a siren on my behalf, I asked—ordered—that it be stopped.

In 1898, during the Spanish-American War, there was talk about the possibility of the enemy bombarding American cities from the air. At a school recess one morning, a rumor spread that a Spanish airship was over Abilene. All the boys rushed uptown to see the sight, never questioning its feasibility, and classes went to pot. We quieted down when the object proved to be a huge box kite, used by merchants to advertise a sale of straw hats.

Memory of school is a blur of grades entered and grades passed. At one point a suggestion was made that I skip a grade. I may well have had some advantage over my classmates, for I lived in a home where learning was put into practice. The ability to read correctly in a good clear voice, for example, was necessary for a daily family rite, the reading of the Bible. The suggestion that I skip a grade was never put into effect. My conduct was not the equal of my reading ability.

FEW of us at school in Abilene felt the classroom as important a center of learning as the office of Cecil Brooks, the telegrapher. He was the radio and television of our day, and to us most notable because during a World Series, he kept his wire open to the East until the games had ended. Nearby, in the "Smoke House," a poolroom, the scoreboard was set up and he relayed the results to the board at the end of each half inning. Those of us who crowded around him in his office could get even quicker results. In the 1906 series of hitless wonders, I remember that truancy rose to unusual peaks.

From time to time we heard news of our wandering Uncle Abraham. He and Aunt Anna, with another Brethren preacher, went off in a cumbersome covered wagon to the Cherokee Outlet country in Oklahoma Territory, an area newly opened to settlement, where they conducted what Aunt Anna described as a "highway-and-hedge call." When winter drove them home,

Uncle Abe designed them a better vehicle—fourteen feet long by seven wide, and six and one-half feet high from floor to canvas roof. It held a table and chairs, a stove, four cots, and a sliding curtain that divided it into sleeping compartments. This contrivance Uncle Abraham christened a "gospel wagon," and after a dedicatory ceremony, they set out again.

My uncle, whether as vet or preacher, had a streak of the carnival barker in him. He reached Herington, Kansas, on the Fourth of July, when a man with a large megaphone was directing the crowds toward the celebration at the edge of town. Uncle Abraham whipped his team and gospel wagon into the line of march. At the next intersection he turned down a side street, brandishing his whip as he stood upright, and shouting at the top of his voice, "This way to heaven!" The crowd followed Uncle Abraham to the other edge of town where, assembling them around his wagon, he delivered a soul-rousing sermon.

In an even smaller town, hard pressed to gather an audience, he lay on his back on the sidewalk, his feet elevated against a wall, and began to read his Bible. In no time at all, a crowd gathered and he sprang to his feet. He had his congregation and they got his sermon.

After their third highway-and-hedge season, my uncle and aunt returned to Pennsylvania where, for a short time, they lived at an orphanage conducted by the River Brethren. Childless themselves, they fell in love with the children, and got the idea of opening a similar home in the Oklahoma Territory.

With no qualms about where either money or orphans would come from, they filed a homestead claim near what is now Thomas, Oklahoma—then only a stopping place on a wagon trail. With his own funds and mainly with his own hands, Uncle Abraham built a frame house. On August 26, 1901, he and Aunt Anna were granted a charter and incorporated the Jabbok Faith Missionary Home and Orphanage. The children came to fill the house, and Uncle Abe farmed the 160 acres well enough to feed and clothe them, with something left over for cash sale. In 1906, the church formally took the orphanage over.

Among the River Brethren, Uncle Abraham came to be known as Mr. Jabbok. Today, on that site, a thriving school is a monument to the faith of two people who dared to dream and to do something about it.

MY HERO was Bob Davis, a fisherman, hunter and guide. He was also a bachelor, a philosopher and, to me, a great teacher. Bob was in his fifties when I knew him, roughly from age eight to sixteen. He never seemed to mind my going along on his expeditions. In the Smoky Hill River, he caught channel cat illegally, using nets, and sold them to the markets for something like ten cents a pound, dressed. In fall and winter, he trapped muskrat, which abounded, and mink, which were scarce. For partially cured muskrat hides he got eleven cents; for mink, \$1.50.

Bob had an old double-barreled shotgun. At the time it seemed perfectly natural that he should bring down two ducks, from high overhead, with two shots. Years later, when I began to try the same sport myself, I realized what a remarkable shot Bob Davis was.

We spent weekends together on the river with Mother's blessing. He taught me how to use a flatboat, with one paddle (you keep the paddle on one side and feather) and how to set and anchor a net, with the opening downstream. His favorite method of teaching was to ask questions. "In the woods, it's raining. How do you find north?" (The moss on the trees tends to be on the northern side.) "Bub, how do you catch a muskrat?" (You look for his slides, then put your trap on a short chain so he'll drown.)

One thing he taught me, without sanction, was the rudiments of poker. Bob knew poker percentages cold. He would deal me five cards and ask me whether I had a pair.

"Yes, nines."

"All right, how many nines are there out of the forty-seven cards that you have not yet seen?" (Two, of course.) "Well, then, the chance of your drawing a nine is two out of forty-seven with each card. Since you are drawing three cards you have six chances out of forty-seven of catching a third nine."

He dinned percentages into my head night after night around a campfire, using a greasy pack of nicked cards that must have been a dozen years old. So thoroughly did he drill me that I was never able to play the game carelessly or wide open. Since most tyros and many vets know nothing about probabilities, it was not remarkable that I should come to be a regular winner. In the Army, when I found I was playing with officers who were losing more than they could afford, I stopped playing the game.

MY INTEREST in cooking has always caught the attention of the press. I have no idea how many miles of film have been wasted on me as I broiled fish or steaks over a fire. I suppose I began cooking when I made those tamales to sell. Then I acquired some rudiments of the art when Milton fell ill with scarlet fever. The doctor had quarantined certain rooms in the house, and my father and the rest of the boys lived downstairs while Mother and a neighbor woman remained with Milton the entire time. Arthur and Ed had part-time jobs, so the kitchen chores fell to me. Mother would call instructions from the sickroom and I would carry them out. It was a new experience and I felt very important indeed. I don't think the family lived too well during those weeks but I learned something about the preparation of simple dishes. My principal contribution was a hearty vegetable soup, always a family favorite.

While we were in high school, a group of us went camping out on Lyons Creek, about twenty miles south of town. We decided that each day two boys should do the cooking, and I paired off with Ames Rogers, a banker's son. I had asked Mother for help, and she had taught me to bake and boil potatoes, to handle steaks—which in those days were pan-grilled—and even to produce a satisfactory pie. The gang therefore wanted Ames and me to cook every day, and naturally we demanded our price: the others had to clean up, get the wood, build the fire. And we demanded first helpings of any scarce commodity.

In the last few days we ran short of money and the rations became meager. I took an old shotgun out, but all I got were two

or three squirrels—very little to feed a sizable group of hungry boys. With a few potatoes and beans, I tried to build a good stew. When we saw that we were going to be short, Ames and I began to talk loudly about how we hoped that the crow we had shot would be edible.

The boys drifted over to the kettle, looked in and said they weren't hungry. Of course Ames and I ate heartily and then asked, "What's wrong with you people? Don't you like squirrel stew?"

The group, who had been looking at us with barely disguised distaste, now jumped up and began a rush. Ames and I took off as fast as we could, well knowing that they would stop to get a share of whatever was left.

These experiences gave me a continuing interest in cooking. When, as an officer in the Army, I had the usual chore of inspecting the enlisted men's mess, I knew that if we were to have a happy company, not only good food but decent preparation was essential. I volunteered for Cooks and Bakers School when I was at Fort Sam Houston, and though I didn't qualify as a cook, I did learn enough to say what was wrong with the food my men were getting.

THE MOST dramatic difference between high schools of today and those of my time is probably not in the curriculum but in the life expectancy of the students. Then, except for the common cold and chilblains, any illness might easily be fatal. It was taken for granted that a Fourth of July celebration would produce injuries ranging from powder burns to lockjaw. Quarantines were imposed for the more common ailments of diphtheria, scarlet fever and the like. Treatment consisted of a few simple medications and a nourishing diet while the victim and the family waited for cure or death. Diagnosis was hardly exact. "Blood poisoning" was a favorite phrase to cover a multitude of mishaps.

Racing down a wooden platform one evening with some of my friends, I slipped and fell. The damage seemed slight—just a raw, red spot on one knee. The next morning there were no ill effects and I went to school. On the evening of the second day, I did not

feel well so I lay down on the sofa and dropped off, it seems, into delirium. There ensued a hectic couple of weeks. The doctor came two or three times a day and only occasionally was I conscious—usually when he had to explore the wound. Once, to my great alarm, I heard him mention the word “amputation.”

When Ed got home that day, I made him promise to make sure that under no circumstances would they amputate my leg. “I’d rather be dead than crippled, and not be able to play ball.” The doctors were frustrated by my attitude, but my parents agreed to accept my decision. Eventually the progress of the disease was stopped, but I was so ill that I remained out of school the rest of the spring and had to repeat that year.

This episode has often been told, and one story said that my parents prayed day and night, for two weeks. This is ridiculous. My parents were devout Christians and there is no doubt that they prayed for my recovery, but they did it in their morning and evening prayers. They did not believe in “faith healing.”

EXCEPT for my extracurricular reading of history, no school subjects set me afire except geometry. I was more excited by my summer and after-hour jobs. I earned twenty-five cents a day picking apples, and fifty cents a day on a wheat-harvesting job. The binders were horse-drawn and for two seasons I rode the lead horse, until my employer told me I was getting too big.

A few days later I learned of a temporary job. A family moving from Abilene to Hutchinson had some livestock to take along. The animals were to ride in a boxcar, and railway regulations required that someone ride with them. I badgered the man for the job, but he said I was too small and turned me down flatly.

That evening I complained at length to my folks. In one week I had been told that I was too big for one job and too little for another.

High-school commencement, the high point of our lives, was in the Seelye Theatre, the largest gathering place in Abilene. There, on Sunday evening, May 23, 1909, baccalaureate was held. On Monday evening there were class-day exercises, on Wednes-

day evening the senior play, and on Friday evening the grand event, commencement itself.

The senior class play was our version of *The Merchant of Venice*. Edgar played the Duke of Venice and I was Launcelot Gobbo, servant to Shylock. According to the town's paper, Edgar "invested his character with dignity and art." For once in our school careers, however, I got more of the spotlight than Ed. My part was written for a blunderer and seemed to have been made to order for me. The review said:

Dwight Eisenhower as Gobbo won plenty of applause and deserved it. He was the best amateur humorous character seen on the Abilene stage in this generation and gave an impression that many professionals fail to reach.

I have in later years been reviewed along similar lines, but never because I intended to be.

The commencement speaker, Henry J. Allen, editor of the *Wichita Beacon*, who would become Governor and United States Senator, said: "I would sooner begin life over again with one arm cut off than attempt to struggle without a college education."

For Edgar, whose plans to go to Michigan were far advanced, this statement was an endorsement. For me, determined to go, thinking to join Edgar in Michigan when we raised the money, such an emphatic pronouncement was iron in the spine of purpose.

### *Toward college*

ED AND I had just one idea that summer: to get our hands on every cent we could earn. He started working at once for the Belle Springs Creamery Company, where Father was chief engineer.

My best chance seemed to be on a farm owned by a Mr. Bryan. We worked from dawn to dusk, the owner, his son and I. Then I was offered more by a small company making steel grain bins, so I worked there for some months, and became a sort of straw boss.



## *At Ease*

When the time came for Ed to go to the University, I found I could earn still more money as an iceman at the creamery, so I moved over there. The ice was frozen in three-hundred-pound cakes. Three or four of these had to be hauled up each hour on a windlass, and I had to manipulate them with a pair of tongs. The rest of the time I spent helping load the delivery wagons. Though far from intriguing, the job did develop muscles.

My last year in Abilene, I became the second engineer in the creamery's ice plant. The work week was eighty-four hours, from six p.m. until six a.m., and my agreement called for fifty-two weeks a year. (Three or four times a year I got a helper to take my place briefly.) But the salary was impressive—\$90 per month.

THROUGH my early teens I had formed a friendship with Everett Hazlett, son of one of the town physicians, which endured to the day of his death in 1958. While I was in high school "Swede" Hazlett attended a private military school, where he acquired an interest in the service academies, particularly the Naval Academy at Annapolis. He applied for an appointment there, but he failed the mathematics examination. However, he got a reappointment and a chance to take the test again. Back in Abilene to study, he urged me to try it too.

I was not difficult to persuade—first, because of my long interest in military history, and second, because I realized that if I could make it, I would take the money burden entirely off my family. Swede wrote to the Navy Department for copies of past entrance examinations—which were, incidentally, almost identical to those for West Point—and we began to study together. We both had jobs, but we could meet for three or four hours a day. During these sessions we asked each other questions and then checked the answers against those given in the Navy exams. With the close of summer my friend went to what he called a "cram" school, and I went for a review course at my old high school, where my teachers were anxious to help.

My congressman had no additional vacancy in either military academy. So I wrote to Senator Joseph Bristow requesting an

## Senior Class



EDGAR NEWTON  
EISENHOWER

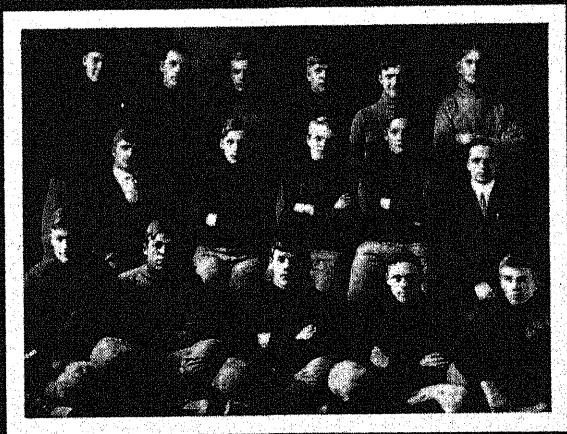
"Big Ike" is the greatest football player of the class. Also on his head there is a depression due to non-development of the conscious and over-development of the sub-conscious brain. Football teams '07, '08, '09. Baseball teams '07, '08, '09: captain '08.



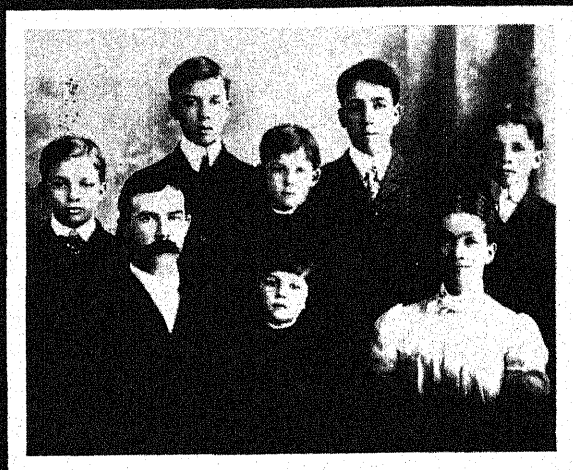
DAVID DWIGHT  
EISENHOWER

"Little Ike," now a couple inches taller than "big Ike," is our best historian and mathematician. President of Athletic Association, '09; Football, '07, '08; Baseball '08, '09.

Two "Ikes" graduate from Abilene High School, 1910.



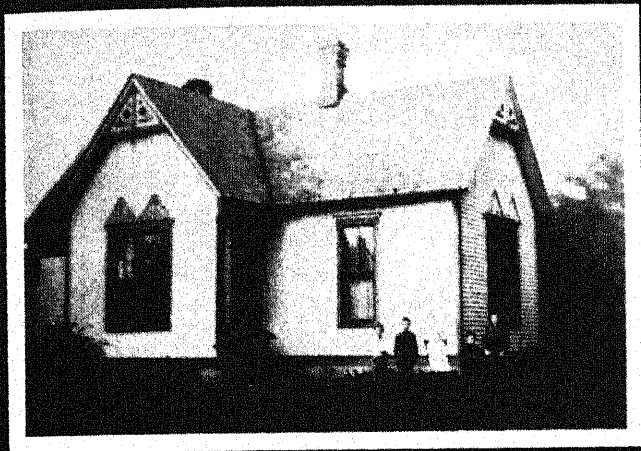
The Abilene High football team, 1909. I am third from left, back row.



Dwight (age about eight), Edgar, Earl, Arthur, Roy,  
Father, Milton, Mother.



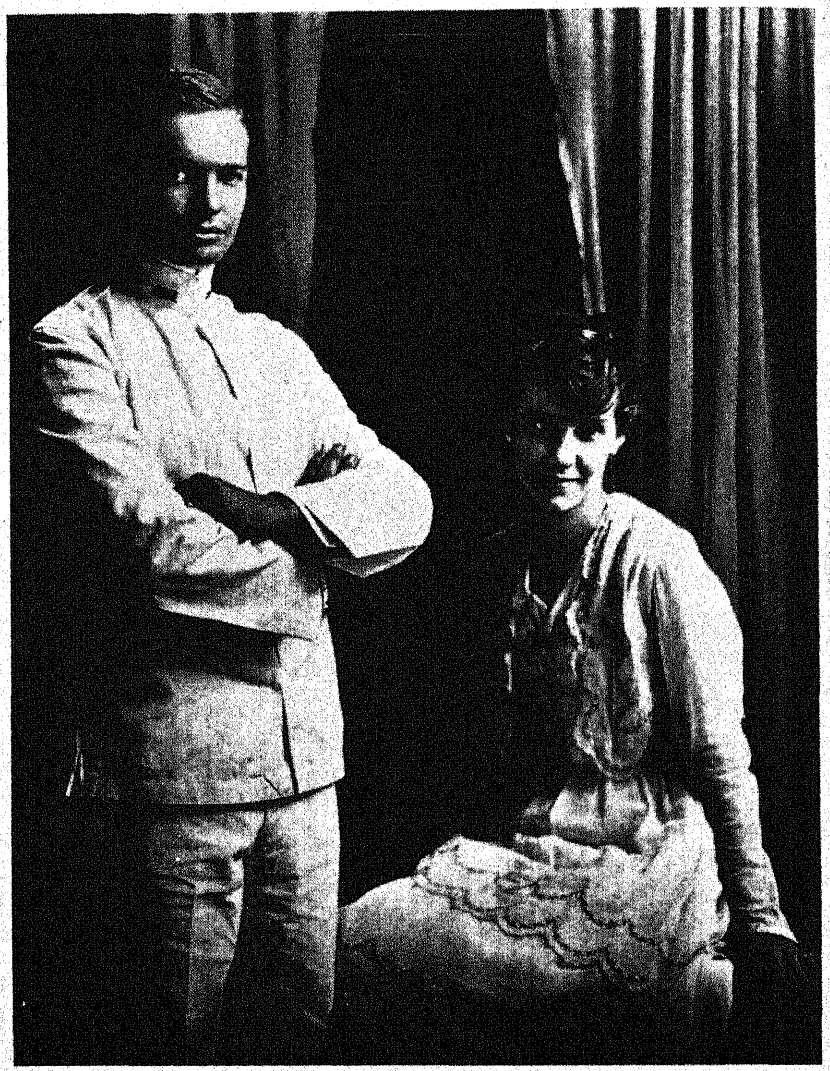
The family grown up. On the Fourth Street porch, 1926.



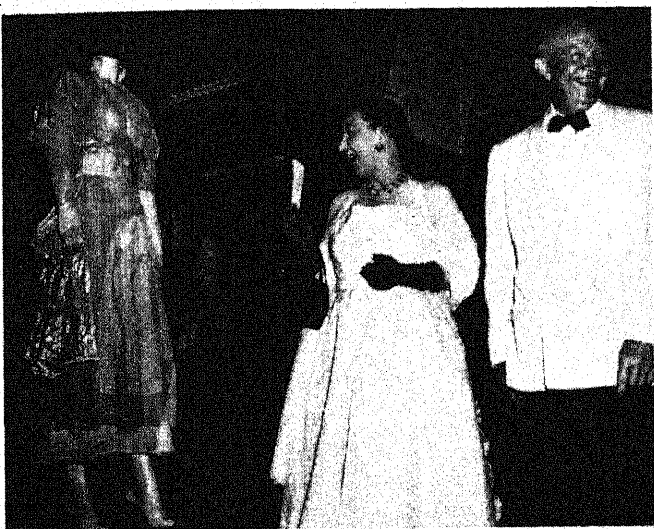
Our first house, on Second Street, was tiny.



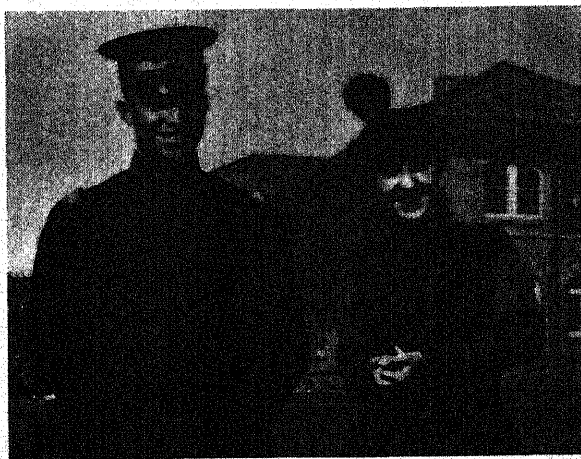
Christmas 1952, New York. As President-elect, with mother-in-law, wife, daughter-in-law Barbara, and grandchildren Susan, John, Jr., and Barbara Anne.



Mamie and I were married on July 1, 1916, in Denver.



In 1955 her wedding gown went on display in Washington.



We met at Fort Sam Houston, Texas, my first post.





*Left:* With General MacArthur during the Army veterans' bonus riots, Washington, D. C., 1932. *Right:* Receiving the Legion of Merit from President Roosevelt, 1943.



*Left:* Honoring General de Gaulle and the Fighting French, London, July 14, 1942. *Right:* Signing the guest register at West Point, 1945, while Lieutenant John Eisenhower looks on.



Testing marksmanship with Prime Minister Churchill and General Omar Bradley in England, 1944.



As President, tossing out the ball to start the 1953 baseball season, Senators vs. Yankees.





A favorite sport—outdoor cooking in 1960.

appointment as either a cadet or a midshipman, and I asked various influential men in town to write him in support of my application. There must have been a score or more who wrote, and each one stressed the unimpeachable honesty of my father, David Eisenhower. I never ceased feeling grateful to my father.

Senator Bristow authorized me to participate in the preliminary examination which determines who is eligible for appointment. The examination would apply to both Annapolis and West Point, if the applicant so chose. Because Swede had been given a naval appointment, Annapolis was my first choice, and I came through as number one for the Naval Academy. Then came the blow. The entrance regulations for that academy specified an age limit of twenty, and I had assumed that meant until the twenty-first birthday. But because I would be almost twenty-one by the time the next class enlisted, I was ruled ineligible.

I had, however, come out as number two for West Point, so there was some hope there. Then I learned that the man who ranked above me had not met the physical requirements. I got the appointment from Senator Bristow in the spring of 1911.

This was a good day in my life. The only person truly disappointed was Mother. Courageous, sturdy, self-reliant, she was also the most honest and sincere pacifist I ever knew. It was difficult for her to approve the decision of one of her boys to embark upon military life. I told her not to worry because I hadn't yet passed the final examination. Most boys took special training for a full year to prepare for service-academy exams, and chances were that I would fail. This did not appease her, for she could hardly hope one of her boys would fail a tough examination. But, because she and my father always insisted that each boy should be the master of his own fate, she kept her own counsel.

So in the spring, I went to St. Louis to take the examination at Jefferson Barracks. The farm boy was completely unprepared for

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PICTURE CREDITS: Pages 97, 98 (bottom), 99 (top), 100: Paul Jeffcoat from Monkmeyer Press Photo Service, New York. Pages 98 (top), 99 (bottom), 102 (top left, bottom right), 103: Brown Brothers, New York. Pages 101, 102 (top right, bottom left), 104: Wide World Photos, Inc., New York.



the sights of the river metropolis. One night, another applicant and I left the Barracks where we were quartered, and wandered around the city. We walked the streets for a while, then took a streetcar and rode it to the end of the line. We found ourselves at a carbarn in East St. Louis, on the eastern side of the Mississippi River. We thought we'd follow the tracks back to the river, but when the line branched we had no idea which one to take. No more streetcars were running on that side of the river, we saw no sign of any other kind of transportation and we were lost.

Then, in a nearby building, we saw a light. We knocked hopefully on the door and soon heard someone moving toward us. The door opened slowly and the first thing we saw was the muzzle of a revolver. A voice said, "Who are you?" We stammered that we just wanted help in getting back across the river. The man apparently decided we were harmless and gave us instructions.

We were only a block from the bridge. We crossed it at double time and just made the final car for the Barracks, which left at one a.m. But we had not solved the problem of how to get into the Barracks. We had violated instructions to be in bed by taps and were afraid we would be barred from completing the examination. Luck was with us. We found a spot where we could scale the wall, and sneaked safely into the building.

Back in Abilene, after an almost unbearable wait, I was informed that I had passed. I was directed to report to the United States Military Academy on June 14, 1911. I had ranked somewhat above the middle of all those admitted. Since many had undergone special training, I did not feel badly about my showing.

A financial deposit was required from the new cadet, to cover his initial clothing issue. I had been able to save this amount and had enough to pay my transportation costs. When I reached West Point, I would have about five dollars in my pocket. It was with such material wealth that I started a military career which, except for the interval of eight presidential years, still continues. It has been rewarding, in many more ways than monetary.

My mother saw me off, and then went back home. Milton told me later that for the first time in his life he heard her cry.



**FOR THE PEACETIME ARMY**

*Fort Sam Houston, Texas, 1916*

BEFORE graduating from West Point, each cadet was to express his preference for duty station. I put down the Philippines, the only one in the class who did, I think, and it seemed logical that I would draw this assignment. The Philippines for years had been at the bottom of the preference list. Because of this, when the time came for purchasing uniforms, I ordered only tropicals. I figured a number of years would pass before I needed the olive drabs and the various dress blues. Since my tropicals cost far less than the average outfit, I was given, upon graduation, several hundred dollars from the forced savings deducted from my paycheck each month toward the purchase of my uniforms.

The President himself was required to sign every commission, and, when I graduated, Mr. Wilson was somewhat preoccupied with the Mexican troubles and with a war that had been going on in Europe since August 1914. I received no orders immediately.

Returning to my home, I set out to have a good time, and did. The money from my equipment-fund surplus was soon exhausted. I made an arrangement to borrow sums from my father, to be repaid after my commission. Then, with my own funds spent, and in debt to my father, I received orders to go to Texas.

Assignment to a continental station meant that all the uniforms necessary had to be in my possession. I was really up against it. In Leavenworth, Kansas, there was a uniformer named Springe, one of the best in the United States, also one of the most expensive. I told him I would have to buy on credit. He agreed and made all my necessary O.D. and blue uniforms, including full dress. So I reached my regiment in San Antonio properly uniformed and badly in debt. However, I soon received my delayed three months' pay and, what with this and some small checks I began receiving from participants in poker games of cadet days, I gradually started to pay off some of what I owed.

One Sunday afternoon after I'd been in Texas for some months, I walked out of the Bachelor Officer Quarters to make a guard-post inspection as Officer of the Day. On the sidewalk across the street was a small group of people, one of whom was Lulu Harris, the wife of a major.

"Ike," she called, "won't you come over here? I have some people I'd like you to meet."

"Sorry, Mrs. Harris," I called back, "I'm on guard and have to start an inspection trip."

She then turned to one young girl, as I discovered later, and said, "Humph! The woman hater of the post."

The girl said something to Mrs. Harris that caused her to call once more. "We didn't ask you to come over to *stay*. Just come and meet these friends of mine."

I walked stiffly across the street to say a polite greeting to the little family gathered around Mrs. Harris. Their name was Doud. They were from Denver and they spent each winter in San Antonio. My eye was instantly caught by a vivacious and attractive girl, smaller than average, with a saucy look about her. If she had been intrigued by my reputation as a woman hater, I was

intrigued by her appearance. I asked her whether she would like to go along on my rounds of the guard posts. To my astonishment she said she would. Later I found that one of the things she was least fond of was walking. Possibly she went along just to take me down a peg. In any event, that was the entrance into my life of Mamie Geneva Doud.

While it soon became almost routine for me to call on her, I had more time than money to spend on courtship. When we went to dinner, it was usually to a Mexican restaurant called The Original, on the San Antonio River, where chili, tamales and enchiladas for two came to about \$1.25, including tip. The old Majestic, a vaudeville house, was the Palace of San Antonio, and everybody went there once a week. These two places made up the largest item in my weekly budget.

When I was not out with Mamie I lived the life of a hermit. During that winter, however, I had one very fortunate evening in which there was more income than outgo. Two of my former classmates had come to San Antonio to take physical examinations for the Aviation Section of the Signal Corps, as our air force was then called. They were heroes: anyone who succeeded in getting into Aviation was assured of a fifty-percent rise in pay. The two young men had organized a little crap game to celebrate.

When I walked into the Infantry Club they greeted me joyfully, saying, "Come on, get in here. We're getting everyone's money because we want to give a party."

"I'm sorry," I said. "I've got two silver dollars in my pocket and that's all. You can't use me in that game."

They jeered good-naturedly and one said, "Come on, every little bit helps."

By dinnertime, I had run my two dollars up to a hundred.

I had warned my fellow players that I had a date and would have to leave at seven. When the time came the two new fliers, now flying low, protested that I couldn't go away and leave them losers.

"Well, I'll tell you what we will do. Both of you seem to be losers in about the same amount," I said. "I'll divide my winnings

into two equal piles. Each of you can take one roll. You can either lose or win and it's O.K. with me."

They couldn't see themselves taking a shot at fifty dollars each on one turn of the dice; so they politely refused and the game was over. The following morning I completed my payments to Mr. Springe for uniforms. Now I was out of debt to everyone except my father.

The commanding officer of our regiment, the 19th U. S. Infantry, was Colonel Millard F. Waltz. My first encounter with him left me . . . well, a little up in the air. A small group of us happened to be standing one evening near the flagpole, which had strong supporting cables reaching from the ground to a point fifty or sixty feet up the pole. Just for fun I said that I could easily climb one of these, using hands only. Another second lieutenant said I was talking tommyrot.

I retorted, "What would you like to bet?" He produced five dollars. I had one lone five-dollar bill in my wallet, so I handed it to one of the other lieutenants, as stakeholder.

I stripped off my blouse and started up. I had no difficulty—rope climbing had been one of my favorite exercises at West Point—and was chuckling cockily about a windfall that would pay for an evening out with my girl when I heard a bellow from below. "Who are you up there?"

With a shock, I realized who was talking—it was Colonel Waltz. "Mr. Eisenhower, Sir."

"Come down here," he said.

"Sir," I called down, "I was bet five dollars that I couldn't overhand my way to the top of this cable. Could I please go on up and touch the pole and then come down?"

"DO AS I SAY AND DO IT RIGHT NOW, GET DOWN HERE!"

Sheepishly, I let myself down the cable and as quickly as my feet touched the ground came to a stiff salute. First he ordered me to don my blouse, and then began taking me over the coals. Finally he stalked off, and no sooner was he out of earshot than the man I'd had the bet with claimed he had won the five dollars.

I objected vigorously. The bet was, at the least, a draw, because it had been nullified by the intervention of the C.O. The argument got hot and heavy, until I suggested that we finish it with fists. However, the majority declared the bet to be a draw and the money was returned to each side.

As the winter wore on, I became more and more enamored of Mamie. On Valentine's Day, 1916, I gave her my class ring and shortly afterward went heart in mouth to ask her father for the hand of his daughter. She was nineteen. He said this was far earlier than he had expected her to marry, but he would approve, provided we waited a reasonable time. We tentatively agreed to the following November, when Mamie would be twenty.

Months earlier I had applied for transfer to the Aviation Section. Only a few nights after my talk with Mr. Doud, the application was approved. That night I went to the Douds' house walking on air. But the news of my good fortune was greeted by Mamie's family with a large chunk of chilly silence.

It was broken by Mr. Doud, who said that if I were so irresponsible as to want to go into flying, he and Mrs. Doud would have to withdraw their consent. For the next couple of days I pondered the matter in misery.

As anxious as I was to try it, the Aviation Section was just another branch of military service. Perhaps I should take a broader look at my future in the military. Possibly I had been too prone to lead a carefree debt-ridden life. Now I made a professional decision I have never regretted. It was to perform every duty given me to the best of my ability and to make a creditable record. In this way I would become the finest Army officer I could, it didn't matter in which branch of the service.

I went back to the Douds and announced that I was ready to give up aviation. My decision was an immense relief to them because Mamie, who understood how I felt about getting into flying, had been raising quite a fuss. Soon she went back to Denver with her family. As a symbol of my new seriousness and sacrifice, I stopped smoking ready-made cigarettes, which were then about a dollar a carton, and went back to rolling my own.



At about the same time, the troubles with Mexico became more intense and the National Guard was mobilized on the border area. I left the post to live in a camp where I became an Inspector Instructor of a Guard regiment. My duties were to help straighten out administrative snarls and to supervise training. I enjoyed the work, and it was one of the most valuable years of preparation in my early career. I began to devote more hours of study and reading to my profession, but I did not neglect my courting, which now had to be carried on by correspondence.

Throughout the winter of 1915-16 there was a rising clamor for the United States to act more vigorously against both German submarine warfare, in which many of our ships had been sunk, and against Mexico, whose depredations across the border seemed to us unconscionable. Many people became impatient with President Wilson. He was well aware that America was not militarily capable of joining immediately in any major war abroad and so he continued to apply reasonable arguments in an attempt to get the Kaiser to stop the inhuman submarine campaign.

All the trouble, of course, was reflected in the papers and in our letters. Finally, Mamie and I decided we should advance the date of our wedding. Mamie would contact her parents, then in the East, and I would try to get a short leave from the Army. I asked for twenty days. Although the War Department denied furloughs for any but emergency purposes, it seemed to me that imminent marriage was just that. This didn't impress the Colonel, but he did send my letter on to the department commander, General Funston. To my surprise, I was ordered to report to Department Headquarters. I marched over there, dressed in my best uniform, shoes polished and everything spick-and-span. I didn't want any sloppiness to create a bad impression.

"I understand you want to get married," the General said, and asked what the rush was all about.

I told him and he smiled. "You may have ten days. I am not sure that this is exactly what the War Department has in mind, but I'll take the responsibility."

Now I had to get to Denver. I had no wedding ring and it was

Sunday. Also, as usual, I was short of money. I looked up a friend who worked for the Lockwood National Bank of San Antonio, and told him my story. He laughed and said that any overdrafts that I might write during the wedding period would be honored. In those days the credit rating of an Army officer was of the highest order.

Next I went to find another friend who was the manager of Hertzberg's jewelry store. He opened the store and gave me a ring on credit. So with a new ring, new debts, ten days, and high hopes, I started on my journey.

We were married in the Denver Central Presbyterian Church. Our honeymoon was a couple of days at a nearby mountain resort, Eldorado Springs. We went back to Mamie's home for a day or two, then took the Union Pacific to Abilene, arriving about four in the morning.

We could stay only a few hours, but my mother was determined to give us at least one fine meal in her house. So instead of the normal breakfast that morning we had a monumental fried-chicken dinner. It was a warm and welcome banquet. Earl and Milton were excited to meet my bride, and became friends with her immediately.

We arrived back in San Antonio to be greeted by young Army friends laden with gifts. The post grapevine had given our wedding complete coverage. In my old bachelor quarters of two rooms and a bath, there were more packages. There was a chafing dish, a percolator, a toaster, a broiler and a tiny stove. We soon discovered we'd have use for them.

Mamie, young, attractive and full of life, was the pet of the post. She was showered with attention from officers and ladies of all ages, and thoroughly enjoyed the officers' mess, except for one detail—the food.

More unhappy each day with the menu, we began using our wedding presents to make coffee, candy and other minor dishes. My cooking experience was now some years in the past, and Mamie knew even less about cooking than I, but our table fare began to include pot roast, steaks and chicken—all of which were

plentiful and cheap—and the meals became so presentable that now and then we could invite a couple of friends.

Soon after we were married, I was made Provost Marshal of the post. We had trouble keeping order for a while, with untrained soldiers and conflict between the Regular Army and the National Guard. One evening I went out on a patrol with two men. We were checking on bars and other places of dim repute when suddenly there was a shot almost beside my ear. We looked around and there was a second shot. By then my corporal, a huge fellow, had located the shooter. He dragged him out of an alley.

"Hey, watch it," the man said harshly. "I'm an officer." And he was, a National Guard lieutenant.

"I don't care what you are," said the corporal. "You shot at my lieutenant."

We turned him in and a National Guard court fined him five dollars. Penalties were stiffer later, but there were times when I was frightened for Mamie, who often had to be alone. I had given her a .45 pistol and showed her how to use it. One morning I said, "Mamie, let's see you get your pistol out—as if there were somebody trying to break in through the front door."

She went to look for it. She had hidden it behind a piano, inside a bedding roll, under other possessions, and in general so far buried that she couldn't have gotten it out in a week. I decided to concentrate on trying to make the camp safer.

By early spring, 1917, the danger along our southern border had been reduced, but conditions between the United States and Germany had worsened. The Germans had resumed unrestricted submarine warfare, and in early April President Wilson went before the Congress and asked for a declaration of war. As usual, our country was unprepared. Intensive efforts were started to raise our strength and enable us to participate in a conflict that had been raging in Europe for more than two years. The great mobilization of 1917 was on.

One method of expanding the Army was drawing cadres of officers and men from the Regular regiments and forming them into new regiments together with recruits. The 19th Infantry was

directed to form the 57th and I was chosen to go with the new group. My job was to be regimental supply officer, and my orders were enough to dismay a young man with less than two years of service. Within two or three days three thousand recruits, equipped only with clothing and barracks bags, would reach the now vacant Camp Wilson, just out of Fort Sam Houston. I was responsible for providing them with food, shelter, supplies, and anything else that men needed to subsist and train. For the next five days I was on the move almost around the clock.

Fortunately, I had with me one noncommissioned officer who had been in the supply business a long time. We borrowed trucks, found enough tents to shelter the men from the weather, and somehow appropriated enough food to give them at least a meager meal their first evening and the next morning.

Then it was decided that we would not stay at Camp Wilson but move twenty miles to a place called Leon Springs. Leon Springs boasted a large area for training movements, but nothing else. There was not a building on it.

Competition for supplies was keen among the new regiments. I haunted the quartermaster, ordnance, engineer and medical services, pleading the case of our new Infantry regiment, now approaching full strength. And I kept hammering away at the War Department. But we were to remain critically short of supplies for a long time.

We were working so hard that the Colonel ordered that Sunday should definitely be a day of rest: except for religious services under the trees, we were free to do as we pleased. This was a limited privilege because there was no transportation to go into San Antonio. However, Mamie was determined not to let this situation defeat her. Although she had never driven a gasoline-powered vehicle, she decided to drive our own little car to the camp and spend some Sundays with us there. Her first venture was lively.

She did remember how to start the car and get it into forward gear, and so she began the twenty-mile trip, starting early in the morning to avoid traffic. She wanted the whole road to herself

and I must say she needed it. She had telephoned in advance and asked me to meet her at the gate, so I walked the mile or so to the entrance and waited. I was finally rewarded by seeing Mamie coming down the hill. Then I heard her calling, "Ike! Get on, get on quickly—I don't know how to stop this thing!"

Cars in those days had broad running boards and it was no trick to hop aboard, get the door open and take over. She leaned back with a sigh of relief. She told me that when she'd reached a railroad crossing where she was supposed to stop and look, she had had to go straight across—fortunately without incident.

I spent part of that day giving her driving lessons. She became passably proficient; nevertheless, I induced her to make an early start back and to telephone me as soon as she arrived. Two hours later I got the welcome news that she was safely at home. From then on I arranged for an experienced driver to go along when Mamie visited the camp.

One day I assembled the regiment's junior supply officers for a lecture on supply in the field. We gathered just outside my tent, under a large tree. A drizzling rain started but we put on rain-coats and kept on. Then there was a terrific bolt of lightning, and the next thing I knew I was lying on my back in the mud with an enlisted man pushing down on my ribs, trying to bring me back to consciousness. With a splitting headache and feeling a little woozy, I walked over to the tent of the adjutant, Captain Walton Walker, and found him in a state of upset. Walton had been telephoning when the lightning bolt came—the phone flew across the room and he had an arm that was rapidly turning black-and-blue. Colonel David J. Baker often remarked that he was the only regimental commander in the Army whose entire staff had been struck by lightning and lived to tell about it.

The Colonel was something of a dyspeptic and fussy about his meals. He complained constantly about the quality of the food and finally added the mess officer's job to my other duties of trying to supply a regiment of thirty-five hundred men with mules, transportation, weapons, shelter and all manner of hardware.

Supplying the Colonel was its own war. The meal of which he

was most sharply critical was breakfast. I had heard him talk often of his liking for game, and this gave me an idea. Walton Walker and I both liked to shoot. We began taking off each morning at about four a.m. for a field where doves were plentiful. By the time the Colonel was ready for breakfast, at about eight, he'd have a fine meal out of our morning shoot.

We learned to bring in at least half a dozen, because the Colonel would frequently say, "Any of these for lunch?" With the best cook we had, we tried broiled breast of dove with bacon, dove stews and dove pies. By giving him bacon and eggs about one morning a week, and lamb chops another, we seemed to keep him satisfied. The other officers got little attention, so preoccupied were we with the Colonel. But this helped everybody—we all enjoyed life more when he was in a good mood.

Anyhow, the regiment was in good shape. We were sure that we were one of the best outfits in the whole Army and were confident that we were destined for overseas duty. Then to my distress I got a special order detaching me from the 57th Infantry and assigning me to the training camp at Fort Oglethorpe, Georgia, to be an instructor of candidates for commission. I tried to get the order changed, but in vain. (The 57th, it turned out, never went to war.) Mamie couldn't go along because I was going to field duty, and the parting was particularly difficult as she was expecting our first child.

At Oglethorpe, a captain now, I went to work training candidates for commissions as second lieutenants. The training program was intensive and tough—designed as much for weeding out the weak and inept as to instruct. The work was fatiguing, but I enjoyed it. Luckily I had for months been reading everything I could find about infantry tactics on the Western Front, and it was paying off. We constructed dugouts, lived in trenches and put into practice what I had read.

Then on the twenty-sixth of September I came out of those trenches and found a telegram dated the twenty-fourth, saying that my son had been born. His name was Doud Dwight. Fortunately, when orders came shortly for me to proceed to another

training assignment, at Fort Leavenworth, I was given time to go by way of San Antonio to visit my wife and our new son.

In San Antonio I reported in at the post and learned that a machine-gun battalion was being organized for overseas duty. It was to be commanded by my friend Colonel Gilbert M. Allen, who heartily endorsed my instant application to join it. I received a curt reply from the War Department, stating that I was considered to be a young officer with special qualities as an instructor. Disappointed, I trekked off to Leavenworth.

I had been on duty there for a few days when Colonel Miller, the post commandant, read me a letter from the Adjutant General which noted that I had several times applied for duty with troops headed overseas. The War Department did not approve of young officers applying for special duty; they were to obey orders and, in effect, let the War Department run the war.

This made me furious, and when the Colonel proceeded to add several reprimands of his own, I reverted to the old, red-necked cadet. I was asking nothing, after all, except to go to battle.

"Sir," I said, "this offense—if it is an offense—was committed before I came under your jurisdiction. If there is punishment to be given out, I think that it should be given by the War Department and not added to by yourself, with all due respect."

I was surprised to hear him say, "Well, I think you're right. I respect you for standing up to your convictions." I left in a friendly mood toward him, although my views of the War Department continued to be beyond easy conversion to parlor language.

### *Training for the invisible war*

BY THIS time I knew enough about officer training and organizing new units—or thought I did—so that the prospect was a dull one. It was small comfort to tell myself that training young officers was a constructive contribution to the war. For one thing, all the West Point traditions that nourished élan and esprit centered on battlefield performance. My mastery of military paper work or

of training methods hardly seemed a shining achievement after seven years of preparing to lead fighting men.

Some of my class were already in France. Others were ready to depart. I could see myself, years later, silent at class reunions while others reminisced of battle. For a man who likes to talk as much as I, that would have been intolerable punishment.

My elation, then, can well be imagined when I received orders in late winter to report to Camp Meade, Maryland, to join the 65th Engineers. This, I was told, was the parent group which was organizing tank-corps troops for *overseas* duty. That word put new spirit into me. I rushed back to San Antonio to see Mamie and our youngster, then took off for Camp Meade.

Our first job was to complete the organizing and equipping of the 301st Tank Battalion, Heavy. These troops were to man the big tanks, a rarity on World War I battlefields. Morale was high: as soldiers promised a new weapon always will, we convinced ourselves that we would have it in our power to clinch victory. All of us were itching to move. In mid-March, I was told that the 301st would soon be taking a ship at New York. I was to go along in *command*!

As a regular officer, I had to preserve the sedate demeanor of one for whom the summons to battle is no novelty. But my exuberance, I'm sure, was shown in every word and gesture to the battalion. I went to New York to plan the embarkation. Two days later I was back at Meade. The plan had been changed. My chief said he was impressed by my "organizational ability." I was to take the remnants of the troops who would not be going overseas, and proceed to an abandoned campsite in Gettysburg, Pennsylvania, of all places.

My mood was black. The new camp, called Colt, had to be established quickly, but I still had to complete all the details of shipping the 301st to New York. So I took a small detachment to Gettysburg, and left them in charge of a Captain Garner, who had been commissioned a year earlier from the ranks. I knew nothing about him, but he seemed quite capable.

We ran up the United States flag just before I started back to



Baltimore. I saw Garner watch it flap on top of the pole. "Captain," he said, "the last time I was on this ground I was standing before a general court-martial which sentenced me to six months in the guardhouse, and then suspended the sentence. Now I'm standing here as temporary commander of the camp in which I was disgraced." As I looked up, this gray-headed former noncom had tears streaming down his face.

All I could manage to say was, "Look, Garner, I know you'll do a splendid job. Good luck." And I got into the car and started off. To this day, whenever we stand to salute the flag, that memory is with me.

IN PLACE of the 65th Engineers the War Department set up an organization called the Tank Corps, under the direction of Colonel Ira C. Welborn. His office was located in Washington and I had to report to him twice a week. Otherwise, I was very much on my own at Camp Colt. As the only regular officer in the command, I really began to learn about responsibility. I was required to take in volunteers, equip, organize and instruct them, and have them ready for overseas shipment when called upon.

By the time the camp was at a strength of about five hundred men, I assumed they would be shipped out and replaced by a fresh lot. Once again I had not reckoned with the powers that be. Because of a crisis in troop strength along the Western Front, the British and American governments had made the "Abbeville Agreement," whereby the British were to provide all sea transport across the Atlantic, and the United States would, temporarily, move to ports of embarkation nothing but infantry troops and machine-gun battalions. This meant that, for an unpredictable period, we could not move tank troops overseas.

Our numbers at Colt began to grow rapidly. I could foresee that before summer several thousand men might be in camp. Once they were competent in basic drill, they would have little to do—we had no tanks as yet—and morale would deteriorate quickly.

I began to look around for ways to instruct the men in skills

that would be valuable in combat and prevent the dry rot of tedious idleness. In earlier wars, crushing defeats had often been the product of lost or misunderstood messages. We realized that anyone who could learn telegraphy and master Morse code would be useful in the Tank Corps. In short order we had a telegraphic school in operation. Then we established a motor school, with secondhand motors of all kinds.

A number of machine guns came in, and we trained gunners until they could take them apart blindfolded and put them together again. Then someone had the notion of mounting the machine guns on truck trailers or on flatbed trucks, and so we were able to train the men to fire from mobile platforms. All this we took on without orders from Washington but with the approval of my chief, Colonel Welborn. It was just as well—the camp continued to expand, and toward the end of July we had ten thousand men and six hundred officers.

During the summer we saw our first tanks. Although we were part of the Tank Corps, we knew about tanks only from hearsay and newspapers. With the cheerful cynicism of soldiers, we had not expected to see one until we reached Europe. However, someone in the war zone apparently thought that there might be virtue in letting the Tank Corps get a look at the machine we were to operate.

Three small French-manufactured Renault tanks were sent to us. Each weighed about seven tons, and each carried either a machine gun or a small one-pounder cannon, mounted in a revolving turret. Each *was* to carry, I should say; the tanks arrived without weapons. Again, we improvised.

I had been told that my command of Camp Colt would be only temporary, that, after I had the training operation organized, Colonel Welborn would consider my assignment overseas. Now that the camp was operating smoothly, the Colonel had a change of heart and said he could not possibly recommend my transfer to Europe until the camp closed for the winter.

He did, however, finally promise to put me in command of the November shipment of troops. After hearing this in late summer,

I began to assemble the troops I wanted to take overseas. Understandably I wanted to make certain that they were without any faults that I could eliminate.

It was one evening in September that we received our only group of inductees (or drafted men). The next morning, alarming reports started to reach me that some of the new men were registering high fevers and were obviously very ill. Before noon, Spanish flu was recognized. Because the men had not been confined to quarters, and some of them were obviously carriers, the whole camp had to be considered as exposed.

We put up every kind of tent with makeshift bedding, and any man with the slightest symptom was isolated from the others—if only by canvas partitions between the beds. Each man who had been directly exposed to the disease was, wherever possible, put in a tent by himself.

By the second day some of the men had died. The week was a nightmare and the toll was heavy. The little town had no facilities to take care of the dead—which were to number 175. Churches were taken over for hospital use as the numbers of sick mounted rapidly. The whole camp was on edge. No one knew who was going to be stricken, and death came suddenly.

In April, Mamie had arrived with our new baby, "Icky," and we found quarters in Gettysburg. While I could not be at home all night, whenever possible I would go there in the evening. It was fun to have the chance to see my son growing up and to spend the evenings with my wife. But now, of course, I was desperately worried about them. A doctor, Lieutenant Colonel Scott, who had been using a number of strong sprays on patients, told me he would like to experiment with my family and my headquarters staff. I told him to go ahead.

Each morning he would use two sprays on our throats and nostrils; one was intensely strong and pungent, and the other was, I think, a sort of soothing syrup to follow the first. We were fortunate—or he was smart. Not a single person in my headquarters command or my family contracted the flu.

The losses were heavy but because of the strict measures taken

by the camp surgeon, one week after our first death the last one occurred, and the epidemic was under control. The flu experience in other and bigger camps was far less satisfactory than ours. I was ordered by the War Department to send thirty of our doctors to show what measures had been taken.

When the epidemic was over, Colonel Welborn offered to recommend me for full colonel if I would give up my plans for overseas service. I declined, saying, "I'm ready to take a reduction in rank to the average of my class—to major, that is—if the lieutenant colonelcy which I have now stands in the way of my going overseas." The November group was in good shape. Nothing was going to prevent my meeting the departure target date.

I had made no provision for imminent German defeat. In the first days of November, talk began about the weakening of German resistance. On the eleventh of November, 1918, the Armistice was signed. I had missed the boat in the war we had been told would end all wars.

For Mamie and me, the pleasure of the Armistice was qualified by the news that Mamie's younger sister was dead. This was a terrible blow for both of us. The girls had been close and I had loved "Buster" deeply. Mamie had to go alone to Denver for the funeral, taking Icky with her, because I could not leave. It was a difficult parting for us, the most trying we had encountered in our less than three years of married life.

At Colt, however, I had no time even for reflection. Nothing at West Point or in the forty months since graduation had prepared me for helping to collapse an Army from millions to a peacetime core. A trickle of applications for immediate discharge from every unit in the Army began flowing into our camp headquarters. The trickle became a small Niagara. Winter was coming on fast, and we had no proper shelter against cold. Fortunately, the War Department reached a fast decision.

As quickly as possible, we cleared the site we had occupied for nine months, and moved to Camp Dix in New Jersey. We had to be meticulous. Every soldier had to have a thorough physical. His financial records had to be checked to make sure that he had

gotten all his final payments, and his transportation back home had to be arranged.

We arrived at Dix with more than five thousand people. We were left with between two and three hundred, plus three Renault tanks. We were ordered to Fort Benning, Georgia.

*Through darkest America with truck and tank*

OUR transfer to Fort Benning was only an interim move until the War Department found a permanent post for the remains of the infant Tank Corps. Mamie and I were impatient for a reunion. But we might be transferred to Texas, to California—or even to Colorado. It meant a brief spell of loneliness; brief, that is, meaning interminable.

As for my career, the prospects were none too bright. I was older than my classmates and was still bothered on occasion by a bad knee; I saw myself in the years ahead putting on weight in a chair-bound assignment, shuffling papers and filling out forms. At times I was tempted, at least faintly, to try my luck as a civilian. An Indiana businessman who had been a junior officer at Camp Colt offered me a position at considerably more pay than a lieutenant colonel and certainly more than a captain, the grade I would hold as soon as the inevitable demotions came. Staying in the Army meant years of trying to stretch dollars and merge dimes. No one can be a more fearful worrywart than a young man trying to read his future in a bleak moment.

There was, after all, a brighter side. I had been singularly fortunate in the scope of my first three and a half years of duty. How to take a cross section of Americans and convert them into first-rate fighting men had been learned by experience, not by textbook. Not to overstate the case, I had a feeling for the military potential, in human terms, of the United States.

At Benning I had far too much time on my hands. In March 1919, we moved back to Camp Meade—Meade to Meade within a year for me. But the Tank Corps was still marking time, its future

uncertain. And Mamie, our son and I still had to be separated. Meade was a cantonment unsuitable for families. Tank officers were housed in Bachelor Officer Quarters. Because the cities were distant and the local recreation facilities were dismaying, there was every chance of going to seed, of filling the time at the card table or the bar.

But there were chances to reach out, to search for duty that was more than perfunctory. Major Sereno Brett and I heard about a truck convoy that was to cross the country from coast to coast, and we were immediately excited. Today such a trip might seem humdrum. In those days, we were not sure it could be accomplished at all. Nothing of the sort had ever been attempted. I wanted to go along, partly for a lark and partly to learn.

The trip would dramatize the need for better main highways. The use of Army vehicles of almost all types would offer an opportunity for comparative tests. And many Americans would be able to see samples of equipment used in the war just concluded: even a small Renault tank was to be carried along. Brett and I got our orders and joined the truck train the next day.

The convoy was directed to proceed overland from Washington to San Francisco without delay, via the Lincoln Highway. Delay, however, was to be the order of the day. The convoy had been literally thrown together. All drivers had claimed lengthy experience in driving trucks; most colored the air with expressions for starting and stopping that indicated a longer association with teams of horses. It took a week or ten days to achieve any kind of discipline. Roads varied from average to nonexistent. Even in the earliest stage of the trip, where the roads were paved, we were well supplied with trouble.

The convoy left Washington at 11:15 a.m. At 2:50 p.m. the Trailmobile Kitchen broke its coupling. A fan belt broke on a White Observation Car. And a Class B had to be towed into camp at the Frederick Fair Grounds with a broken magneto. The weather was fair and warm, the roads excellent. The convoy had traveled forty-six miles in seven and a quarter hours. The second day it made sixty-two miles in ten and a half hours.

In some places, the heavy trucks broke through the surface of the road and we had to tow them out with the caterpillar tractor. Some days when we had counted on sixty or seventy or a hundred miles, we would do three or four. Maintenance crews were constantly on the job to keep the vehicles running. They did good work, as I recall. We lost only two vehicles by accidents, and one was beyond their help—it rolled down a mountain.

One by-product of this trip was the nodding acquaintance that I acquired with the face and character of the country, east to west. We were always routed through the main streets of each community. Our snail's pace enabled me to observe anything different or unusual. At every overnight stop I tried to learn as much as I could about local interests.

Mamie and all the Douds met the truck train at South Platte in Nebraska and went along with us for the next three or four days, as far as Laramie, Wyoming. This was a fine interlude, and I decided that it would be nice, now that I was out there already, to apply for a leave with my family in the West at the end of the tour—if indeed we ever reached the end.

The trip wasn't all work. Once we got into a reasonably dependable pattern, for machines and men alike, there were effervescent spirits to take advantage of every lull—particularly after we had crossed the Missouri and were in more sparsely populated areas. In western Wyoming, we camped near a little settlement that boasted a restaurant, a post office, a telegraph station, two stores and a half dozen houses. Sereno Brett and I decided that one of the easterners in our group, a man who was more gullible than he should have been about conditions west of the Hudson River, should be given a taste of the authentic West.

On a visit to the little restaurant, Sereno made friends with several of the local people. After he talked to them, we took a table and waited for the arrival of the easterner and a few of the other boys. During dinner, the natives began to talk loudly about the possibility of Indian trouble. It appeared that an outbreak was imminent. They were terribly disappointed, we overheard, that the motor convoy had come into their region without arms.

As they went on, Sereno and several of us expressed our anxiety. Before we left for camp, we proclaimed our intention of mounting a guard. We borrowed an old shotgun from one of the townspeople and loaded it with shells (from which we had removed the shot). Then we arranged for sentinels.

Courageously, Sereno and I and a few others took the early duty, allotting the dreary small hours of the night to the officer for whom this episode was staged. Just before midnight Sereno let out an occasional shriek, in the manner of a carnival Indian. Then, as we came in off post, we took concealed positions to watch our man.

The recruit took his duties seriously, marching at attention around the camp as if on parade. Sereno and several others went off and from a distance let out weird and strident yelps. Finally, just as we had hoped, the sentry let go with both barrels—to arouse the camp, he explained later. We went back to bed, pleased with ourselves.

There had been no Indian trouble since 1890, of course, but another kind of threat loomed instantly. It happened that one of the duties of our victim was writing up daily progress reports to be telegraphed back to the War Department. We learned that he had drafted a telegram describing the local Indian trouble.

Faster than any vehicle in the convoy, we shot off to find the man who was carrying that message to the telegraph office. When we found him, we took the story to the commanding officer, and pointed out that if such news were to reach the Adjutant General he was unlikely to understand our brand of humor. The commanding officer went along with the gag, and the Indian story went no further.

We did get to San Francisco at long last, although even in California, where the highways were the best we had encountered, we averaged less than ten miles an hour. We were met at Oakland by city officials and the fire department and escorted through flag-festooned streets to dinner at the Hotel Oakland, fireworks, and a dance at the municipal auditorium. The next day we crossed San Francisco Bay on two ferries, paraded through



the city, received our medals and listened as the Governor compared us to the "Immortal Forty-Niners."

The trip had been difficult, tiring and fun. I think that every officer on the convoy recommended in his report that efforts should be made to get our people interested in producing better roads. A third of a century later, after seeing the autobahns of modern Germany, I decided, as President, to put an emphasis on this kind of road building. When we finally secured the necessary congressional approval, we started the 41,000 miles of super-highways that are already proving their worth.

My request for leave was granted and I had four weeks with Mamie, our son and her family. The Douds were ready for their annual trip to San Antonio to spend the winter. Because there was still no place for Mamie and Icky near Camp Meade, she would go along with them, and I joined them for the early part of the trip.

It began to rain as we left Denver. In Oklahoma all the roads were mud. Finally, at Lawton, near Fort Sill, we bogged down and had to stay a full week in the hotel there. It was the week of the World Series when Cincinnati of the National League met Chicago of the American League. Mr. Doud and I watched every bulletin that came in, wondering why the great Chicago White Sox could not get going. We spent hours debating what was wrong with Chicago, plotting up every mistake of the Sox manager and coaches. We little dreamed we were second-guessing an event that was to stand in athletics as an all-time low for disloyalty and sellout of integrity.

Out of the "Black Sox" scandal, I learned a lesson and began to form a caution that, at least subconsciously, stayed with me. The stories after each game, narrating the play, were strictly objective. But stark facts and objective reports could not give the whole story. With the passage of years, I grew increasingly cautious about making judgments based solely on reports. Behind every human action, the truth may be hidden. Unless circumstances demanded an instant judgment, I learned to reserve mine until the last proper moment. This was not always popular.

During the White House years I found support from a distinguished American poet. At a time when I was being criticized by many people who thought I was moving too slowly, Robert Frost visited my office and gave me a book of his poetry. On the flyleaf he wrote: *The strong are saying nothing until they see.*

### *Colonel George Patton*

WHEN I returned to Camp Meade in the autumn, many changes had taken place. Senior officers of the Tank Corps were back from action in France. The one I learned to like best was a fellow named Patton. Colonel George S. Patton was tall, straight and soldierly looking. He had a high, squeaking voice, quite out of keeping with his bearing. His two passions were the military service and polo. From the beginning he and I got along famously. Both students of current military doctrine, we shared a belief in tanks—a belief derided by some experienced soldiers who thought tanks clumsy and slow, unreliable, expensive and tactically useless. On several counts they were right. On the last they were wrong.

Before I left on the transcontinental trip, we had started tactical and technical schools on this new weapon. Now we badgered George and the others who had been abroad for detailed accounts of battle operations. We began to evolve what we thought to be a new and better tank doctrine.

Because the tank was looked upon as a front-line infantry weapon, those who followed the accepted doctrine were not interested in any machine that moved faster than infantry could walk—some three miles an hour. George and I and a group of young officers believed that tanks should be speedy and should attack by surprise and in mass. They could cause the enemy confusion, and make actual breakthroughs in defensive positions.

Through a year or more of work, we refined our tactical ideas. We described in detail the tank we believed best for the American Army. We wanted speed, reliability and firepower. We

wanted armor that would be proof against machine guns and light field guns, but not so heavy as to damage mobility.

We were constantly experimenting. The small tanks—the Renaults—bogged down much more easily than the big, clumsy American Mark VIIIs. The engine in the Mark VIII was the powerful Liberty, originally designed for airplanes. We devised a system of using Mark VIIIs to tow the Renaults through depressions and up slopes which they could not manage on their own.

One day we were working out an attack problem and testing our scheme through a deep, muddy ravine. We had hitched three light tanks to a big tank with inch-thick steel cables about twenty feet long. Patton and I were standing on the upslope as the big tank crawled painfully to the top of the ravine. The noise was almost deafening; but in the midst of it we heard a ripping sound and looked around just in time to see one of the cables part. The flying end whirled like a striking snake and snapped past our faces at machine-gun-bullet speed, cutting off saplings as if the ground had been shaved with a razor.

We looked at each other. I'm sure I was just as pale as George. That evening he said, "Ike, were you as scared as I was?"

"I was afraid to bring the subject up," I said. We were certainly not more than five or six inches from sudden death.

Immediately instructions were issued that when extra strain was put on cables, all personnel should be kept out of the way.

We were anxious to discover the best obtainable machine gun, and one day we took a .30 caliber Browning water-cooled gun into the field to test its endurance. We set up the targets in front of a backstop and shot away to our hearts' content.

Sustained firing does not improve a rifled weapon's accuracy. As a machine gun heats up and the barrel expands, the rifling begins to be ineffective and the bullets fly in a pattern called keyholing—that is, instead of rotating around their long axis, they fly helter-skelter through the air. While George operated the gun, I used a pair of strong field glasses to see how the bullets were behaving in the air. After an extra-long burst, they began acting strangely, and I said we should have a look at the target. We

started forward from where we were standing, one on either side of the gun. As we converged to continue our conversation, the machine gun suddenly fired.

We jumped back in consternation. At the same time there was another burst of fire. "George," I shouted, "that gun's so hot it's just going to keep on shooting!" We raced off to one side, then back, and George twisted the belt so that no more rounds could feed into the piece. We looked at each other sheepishly. We had acted like a couple of recruits.

For some time, the War Department did not know exactly what George and I were up to, but we and our small group knew—we were pioneering with a weapon that could change completely the strategy and tactics of land warfare. In one respect, these circumstances were better than battle itself. We could experiment and test alternatives. Every mistake we made, every correction, every scrap of information about the exploitation of terrain was added to World War I's lessons, until we had the beginnings of a comprehensive tank doctrine that eventually would make George Patton a legend. Both of us began articles for the military journals; he for the Cavalry, I for the Infantry. Then I was called before the Chief of Infantry.

I was told that my ideas were not only wrong but dangerous, and that henceforth I would keep them to myself. Particularly, I was not to publish anything incompatible with solid infantry doctrine. If I did, I would be hauled before a court-martial.

George was given a similar message. The effect was to bring us even closer. With George's temper and my own capacity for something more than mild irritation, there was surely more steam around the officers' quarters than at the post laundry.

When the National Defense Act of 1920 was passed, the Tank Corps as such was abolished and was made part of Infantry. An impatient as well as a self-confident man, George applied for transfer back to Cavalry. This arm would, he hoped, display more receptiveness to ideas. I, a little less abrupt, began to hope for another assignment. In a new atmosphere, I might influence my superiors to take a look at the possibilities of the tank.

*At Ease*

BEFORE GEORGE AND I were separated, my little family had been reunited. Permission was granted for post commanders to assign wartime barracks as quarters for officers and their families. All expenses of remodeling, renovating and furnishing were to be borne by the officer himself. I was allotted one set of barracks and George a neighboring one. In the early summer of 1920, Mamie and I began transforming the old building into a home. Much of the work was done with the help of soldiers who volunteered and whom I paid a nominal hourly sum. We tore down some partitions and put up others; we scrubbed and waxed floors and brushed buckets of paint onto fiberboard until we had a habitable three-bedroom house.

On an Army post the inhabitants know that their tenancy won't last long. They are unlikely ever to enjoy the trees or shrubs they plant. But they are tireless sowers of vegetables and annual flowers. In the barren surroundings of Camp Meade, we had a challenge to test any gardener's enthusiasm. There was scarcely a blade of grass in the entire encampment. But, with a few men who knew something about landscaping, we got busy. They plowed up our front yard and sowed it with a sturdy grass. They even built a low picket fence around it, which they painted white. At the end, we were proud of the place, which had cost us about seven or eight hundred dollars, not counting the labor Mamie and I had invested.

Perhaps it was the struggle to make it livable that made the place so attractive to us. Finally we felt able to send for Icky, who had been living with Mamie's aunt in Boone, Iowa. When he arrived, we settled down.

SOME of us managed to find time twice a week for a poker game. We normally insisted on playing only with bachelors or others who could afford to lose, but there were a number of men going through the camp who practically forced themselves into the games. One who appeared every night was a uniquely unskilled player. His style made me think of that old maxim of the Persian poet, Hafiz: •

*If he being young and unskillful  
Plays for shekels of silver and gold,  
Take his money, my son, praising Allah;  
The fool was made to be sold.*

This was my poker-playing philosophy until I was shocked into a different attitude. The young man came to me one morning and asked whether I would take government bonds to pay for his losses. "Okay," I said, "I'd be happy to."

Then it turned out that these were Baby Bonds, patiently saved by his wife during the years he had been away at war. I felt like a dog. I told the story to my other friends in the game and we agreed to find some way to return his money. Not wanting to hurt his pride by making him a charity case, we decided to let him win. This was not achieved easily. One of the hardest things known to man is to make a fellow win in poker when he plays as if bent on losing every nickel. It took until nearly midnight to get him back the amount he had lost.

The rest of us then divided our losses and I said I would go to Colonel Patton, the man's commanding officer, and suggest that he give an order that no one in his brigade be allowed to play cards for money. This would be easy because George was no enthusiast about card playing.

The next day the man dropped in and said, "You know what's happened? Old Patton has just stopped all card playing. Isn't that just my luck—just as I was started on a real winning streak?"

I decided that I had to quit playing poker. Most of us lived on our salaries, and most losers were bound to be spending not only their own money but their families'. From then on I did not play with anybody in the Army.

Social life among the married couples was rather thin in the postwar months at Meade, though occasionally a visitor would come up from Washington. One of the incalculable benefits I got from my friendship with George Patton was an invitation to meet a man who was to have a tremendous influence on my life.

Brigadier General Fox Conner had been the operations officer

at General Headquarters for General Pershing in France. When the Conners accepted an invitation from the Pattons to Sunday dinner, Mamie and I were among the guests. Apparently, George had told him some of our ideas about tanks, so the General directed most of his questions at me. By the time he had finished, it was time to go home. He said it was interesting, and thanked us, and that was that.

A few months later, General Conner sent word to me that he was going to Panama to command an infantry brigade. Would I like to go along with him as executive officer? When I told my commanding general about the opportunity, he countered that he could not spare me. I argued the point until the General said he would send my application on to the War Department even though he knew it would be disapproved. He was right. It was turned down.

IF MEADE was at times frustrating, it was also a school where I gained additional experience in handling men. At the beginning of my time there, the General gave me the job of coaching football. I was largely an ad hoc coach, cutting the suit to fit the cloth, and hardly a first-rate one. In only one tactic was I a confirmed practitioner: whenever I could find a good passer, I always tried to open up the game. But our teams did well through 1919, 1920 and 1921.

Barracks or not, Mamie, Icky and I had settled down to a fuller family life than we'd ever known. Icky, naturally, was in his element. For a little boy just getting interested in the outside world, few places could have been more exciting than Meade. The noisy tanks enthralled him. A football scrimmage was pure delight. And a parade with martial music set him aglow. I was inclined to display him and his talents at the slightest excuse, or without one, for that matter. In his company, I'm sure I strutted a bit, and Mamie was thoroughly happy that, once again, her two men were with her.

By now, I was entirely out of debt and I decided we could afford a maid to help Mamie. We hired a girl who seemed both

pleasant and efficient. This began a chain of circumstances leading to a tragedy from which we never recovered.

We learned later that, just before we met her, the girl had suffered an attack of scarlet fever. Although her cure was quick and she showed no evidence of illness, the doctors finally concluded that she had brought the disease to the camp—and that our young son had contracted it from her.

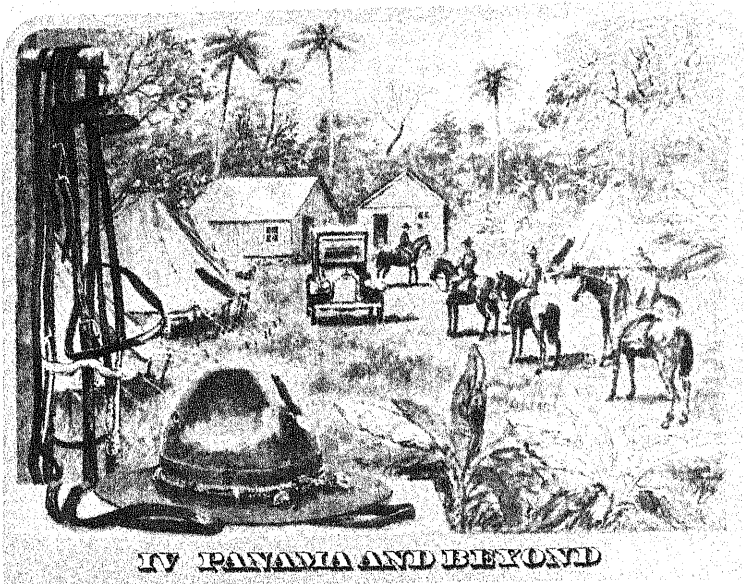
We did everything possible to save him. The camp doctor brought in specialists from the nearby Johns Hopkins Medical School. During Icky's illness, the doctor did not allow me into his hospital room. But there was a porch on which I was allowed to sit and I could look into the room and wave to him. Occasionally, they would let me come to the door to speak to him. I haunted the halls of the hospital. Hour after hour, Mamie and I could only hope and pray. Within a week we lost our firstborn son.

I have never known such a blow. I didn't know what to do. I blamed myself because I had often taken his presence for granted, even though I was proud of him and of all the evidence that he was developing as a fine, normal boy.

Icky was completely devoted to soldiers. Not long after his arrival the men in my command had gotten together and bought him a tank uniform, including overcoat, overseas cap and all the rest. Every time they were out on a tank drill, one of them would ask Mamie's permission to take him along. With his death at the age of three a pall fell over the camp. When we started the long trip to Denver, to bury him with others of Mamie's family, the entire command turned out in respect to little Icky. For Mamie, the loss was heartbreaking, and her grief in turn would have broken the hardest heart.

This was the greatest disaster in my life. Even now as I write of it, the keenness of our loss comes back as fresh and terrible as it was in that long dark day soon after Christmas, 1920. In the months that followed, no matter what activities and preoccupations there were, we could never forget the death of our boy. My wife and I have arranged that when it comes our time to be laid away in our final resting place, we shall have him with us.





#### *A military graduate school*

SOME TIME after my application for transfer to the Canal Zone had been disapproved, orders came out of the blue for me to proceed to that station. What had happened? Fox Conner had informed General Pershing, now the Chief of Staff, that he wanted me as his staff officer, and the red tape was torn to pieces. I was to arrive at Camp Gaillard by January of 1922.

Panama was not the best introduction to life outside the United States. The houses at the station were old, flimsy survivals of Canal construction days. They were infested with vermin and bats, and Mamie hated bats with a passion. Frequent thundershowers penetrated roofs and walls and made the house so damp it was like a Turkish bath after every storm.

Nevertheless, this tour of duty was one of the most constructive of my life, the reason being General Conner. Fox Conner was a tall easygoing Mississippian; he never put on airs of any kind,

and he was as open and honest as any man I have known. One change in my attitude he accomplished quickly—with profound and endless results.

He discovered, with a casual question, that I had little or no interest left in military history. My aversion was a result of its treatment at West Point as an out-and-out memory course. In the case of the Battle of Gettysburg, for instance, each student was instructed to memorize the name of every brigadier in the opposing armies and to know exactly where his unit was stationed at every hour during the three-day battle. Little attempt was made to explain the meaning of the battle, or why it came about.

That same evening I found myself invited to General Conner's quarters. I saw that he had an extraordinary library, especially in military affairs.

"You might be interested in these," he said quietly, picking out two or three historical novels. I remember that one was *The Long Roll* by Mary Johnston, another *The Adventures of Brigadier Gerard* in the Napoleonic Wars. A third was *The Crisis* by the American Winston Churchill.

They were stirring stories and I liked them. "Wouldn't you like to know something of what the armies were actually doing during the period of those novels?" the General asked me when I returned them.

So I took home a few books on military history, and found myself becoming fascinated. But fascination wasn't enough for the General. After I read the first of these books, he questioned me closely about the decisions made. "What do you think would have been the outcome if this decision had been just the opposite? What were the alternatives?" And so I read Grant's and Sheridan's memoirs, and a good deal of John Codman Ropes on the Civil War. I read Clausewitz's *On War* three times. The General had me read Fremantle's account of the Battle of Gettysburg, as well as that of Haskell. As I began to absorb all this material, I became even more interested in our Civil War and we spent many hours analyzing its campaigns.

The best chance for such conversations, was when we were out

on reconnaissance, which was a good deal of the time. In the tropics, the terrain changes rapidly. A trail made one year through the jungle can become completely overgrown by the time the dry season makes it passable again, or a landslide may efface all traces of it. So we were constantly out on our horses, laying out and charting routes over which troops and their pack trains could be rapidly moved in case of attack. We would make camp before dark, and then spend the long tropical evenings in talk around a campfire.

General Conner's interests were not limited to military affairs. He was something of a philosopher. It was he who first said to me, "Always take your job seriously, never yourself." He taught me that splendid line from the French, "All generalities are false, including this one." He would quote Shakespeare at length; he would discuss authors until then strange to me, like Plato, or the Roman historian Tacitus; and he would broaden bull sessions into general conversation about the long history of man, his ideas and his works.

It is clear now that life with General Conner was a sort of graduate school in military affairs and the humanities. It took years before I fully realized the value of what he had led me through. And then General Conner was gone. But in a lifetime of association with great and good men, he is one to whom I owe an incalculable debt.

As my education progressed, I found myself, in turn, educating a horse. Horses and mules were the standard transportation at Camp Gaillard. Shortly after I arrived, I went to the corral to select a mount from twenty or more horses. They had already been well picked over by officers who had arrived before me, and none of them was trained. One of the soldiers on duty, a man named Lopez, struck me as being intelligent and at home with animals, so I asked him to go with me as I walked among the horses. His quick replies to my questions so impressed me that I asked whether he would like to be my orderly. The broad smile that accompanied his "*Sí, Señor Captain*" made us friends at once.

I picked a big, coal-black gelding a bit over sixteen hands. He

was splendid in the conformation of hindquarters, barrel and legs. But forward of the withers he was pure mule, with a short, thick neck and a large head. I decided that he was the best of the lot for use in the jungles.

Lopez beamed. He said that my selection was very fine and he asked whether he could select his own mount from among those allotted to enlisted men. I said yes, and from that moment Lopez and I and the two horses became a closely knit unit.

Although at first Blackie knew only two gaits, the walk and the extended gallop, he soon learned the slow and full trot, and the canter. I was so pleased that I began to teach him some tricks. He learned to kneel when I was ready to dismount. I taught him to follow me when I was on foot and to obey the word "Halt!" He would remain immovable until I called either "March!" or "Come!"

Blackie's complete obedience to command saved his life. One day the General, his aide, our two orderlies and I reached a deep ravine, filled with mud and muck, and obviously impassable. With Lopez and another man, I worked upstream until we reached a spot that looked suitable for crossing. I started slowly into the ravine and found to my horror that there was nothing underfoot but deep, muddy slush. As I felt Blackie go down, I threw my feet out of the stirrups and leaped backward to the bank. The horse, badly frightened, began thrashing around and sinking deeper and deeper.

I shouted, "Blackie, halt!" At first it didn't get through, but at the third repetition he suddenly stopped dead. Had he been a Thoroughbred he would have fought the mud until he smothered. Now he lay quietly while we tried to figure ways to get him to firm ground.

Each orderly had a stout piece of rope on his pommel. We got one of these around Blackie's neck and the other around the top of his saddle. Then Lopez and I, with two other horses, found a place where the ravine petered out. Crossing there, we rushed back to Blackie, had the ropes' ends thrown over to us and began to pull. He was still sinking, so I said, "Come, Blackie," repeating

the command until he began to move again. In the fashion of a horse trying to swim, he leaned forward into the muck as our two horses pulled, and in half an hour we had him safely out. A proud animal, he looked sheepish when he turned his head and saw that he and all his accouterments were completely covered with black mud.

Blackie was not only proud, he was sensitive to applause. I taught him to go up a set of steps on a hillside, fifteen feet in height, and after turning around on a stone at the top, to make his way down. This was difficult; a horse doesn't like steep descents because he can't see his feet and is unsure of his footing. However, once he had mastered the trick, Blackie became the talk of the post, and I frequently had to take him to the steps to show him off for the General's visitors. Whenever he learned a stunt, he did it thereafter almost at his own volition, and, having completed it, would snap his ears forward and walk more like a conquering hero than just an ordinary GI horse.

In my experience with Blackie—and earlier with allegedly incompetent recruits at Camp Colt—is rooted my enduring conviction that far too often we write off a backward child as hopeless, a clumsy animal as worthless, a worn-out field as beyond restoration. This we do largely out of our own lack of willingness to prove that an animal can respond to training, that a field can regain its fertility, that a difficult boy can become a fine man.

The tutoring by Fox Conner and the rewards of working with Blackie were important to me, but the heart of my life was my family. Consequently, the most important event of my Panama assignment was the news that we were to have another child.

The baby was due in August. In the early summer, Mamie took a steamer to New Orleans and then went on to Denver. I followed later and was there in time for the birth, on August 3, 1923, of another boy.

Mamie stayed in Denver until John was a few months old and then returned to Panama. The most absorbing interest in our lives was his growth into a walking, talking, running-the-whole-household young fellow. While his arrival did not, of course, eliminate

the grief we had felt since the death of our first son, he was precious in his own right. Living with a healthy, bouncing baby boy can take parents' minds off almost anything.

ONE OF General Conner's profound beliefs was that the world could not long avoid another major war. He thought it might have been possible to avert one, had the United States been part of the League of Nations. But with conditions as they were, he was certain that the Treaty of Versailles carried within it the seeds of another, larger conflagration. He urged me to be ready for it.

One of his suggestions was that I should try for an assignment under Colonel Marshall. He often said, "In the new war we will have to fight beside allies, and George Marshall knows more about the techniques of arranging allied commands than any man I know. He is nothing short of a genius." There was never an opportunity to serve under Marshall prior to World War II. Indeed, before then I met him only twice, each time only for a moment. But it was enough for me to notice that he had many of the characteristics of Fox Conner.

The friendship of that outstanding man, and the joy of life with Mamie and John, would have made a station far worse than Panama a happy place for me. Nevertheless, the news, via the military grapevine, that I would be transferred from Panama, was welcome. I could dream about the orders until they arrived. Then I came back to earth with a thump. I was ordered back to Meade—to help coach a football team.

### *The Generals: Pershing and MacArthur*

THE WAR DEPARTMENT moves in mysterious ways its blunders to perform—this sentiment expressed my mood in the fall of 1924. Why I was moved thousands of miles to join three other officers in a football-coaching assignment is still a cosmic top-secret wonder to me. But at least it was temporary. My permanent orders were

cut before the end of the season. I was ordered to Benning to command a battalion of tanks—the same old tanks I had commanded several years earlier—as soon as I had had a sixty-day leave with my family.

However, I thought it was high time I was getting to one of the established Army schools. I went to the Chief of Infantry and asked whether the orders could be changed, whether I could instead be sent to Infantry School at Benning. I should have known better: he refused even to listen to my arguments.

While I was on leave in Denver, a telegram arrived from Fox Conner, now serving as Deputy Chief of Staff to General Hines. It was cryptic in the extreme:

NO MATTER WHAT ORDERS YOU RECEIVE FROM THE WAR DEPARTMENT MAKE NO PROTEST ACCEPT THEM WITHOUT QUESTION

For several days I was in a quandary until new orders came. They would indeed have been difficult to accept had it not been for my faith in Fox Conner. I was detailed to recruiting duty in the state of Colorado.

To be assigned to the recruiting service in those days was felt to be a devastating rebuke. After my gloomy interview with the Chief of Infantry, I had reached the somber conclusion that he and I did not see eye to eye on my place in the military sphere. The new assignment confirmed me in this opinion.

The mystery was cleared up in a letter from General Conner, who had known of my disappointment at not getting into Infantry School. Since Benning was under the jurisdiction of the Chief of Infantry, he explained, and it was impossible for an Infantry officer to go to the school there except with the Chief's approval, he, General Conner, had arranged for my temporary transfer from the Infantry to the Adjutant General's office (which was in charge of recruiting). I would never have thought of so drastic a way of circumventing the Chief of Infantry!

Under Conner's novel arrangement, a final order came which said that I had been selected by the Adjutant General as one of

his quota of officers to go to the Command and General Staff School at Fort Leavenworth. I was to arrive there in August 1925.

I was ready to fly—and needed no airplane!

TO THE CYNIC, all this may seem proof of "It's not *what* you know, it's *who* you know." Certainly, had I been denied the good fortune of knowing Fox Conner, the course of my career might have been radically different. Because I *did* know him, I did go to Leavenworth and profited professionally. But on this business of who you know, a one-minute lecture to any young person who may read these words:

Always try to associate yourself closely with those who know more than you, who do better than you, who see more clearly than you. Don't be afraid to reach upward. The friendship might pay off at some unforeseen time, but that is only an accidental by-product. The important thing is that such associations will make you a better person.

I must admit that once my first exultation was over, I began to take a second look. To go to Command and General Staff School without the usual preparatory infantry instruction, at Fort Benning or elsewhere, was like being sent to college without a secondary-school education. It could put me in an awkward position with classmates at Leavenworth, a highly competitive school.

I wrote Fox Conner asking him what I could do to get myself prepared. In his reply, he said:

You may not know it, but because of your three years' work in Panama, you are far better trained for Leavenworth than anybody I know. You will recall that . . . I required that you write a field order for the operation of the post, every day. . . . You became so well acquainted with the technics . . . of preparing plans and orders for operations . . . that they will be second nature to you. You will feel no sense of inferiority. . . .

This was encouraging but I thought it would be a good idea for me to learn what I could. I got copies of the Leavenworth problems and spent considerable time during the winter months solv-



### *At Ease*

ing them and checking my answers against the approved solutions. It was by no means a chore. Practical problems have always been my equivalent of crossword puzzles.

Spring passed quickly and Mamie and I began to pack. Once at Leavenworth, I found the school exhilarating. We were instructed under the "case" method. A pamphlet outlined a suppositious force, located in a particular spot, and gave indications of the enemy's strength and of the mission of the Blue Force, which the student always commanded. The student had first to make a decision on the action to be taken, after which he was given the correct decision and asked to give the proper plans and disposition to support it. Fox Conner had been right. He and I had done this kind of "war gaming" in Panama.

As time went on, it was easy to identify those who were studying too long at night and coming to classes without fresh minds and an optimistic outlook. I established a routine that limited my night study to two hours and a half—from seven to nine thirty—and Mamie saw that I got to bed by that time. This went on five nights a week. On Friday and Saturday nights we unwound at parties at the Officers Club or in friends' quarters.

In the class was a friend from 19th Infantry days, Leonard T. Gerow. We decided to study together. Plotting tactical situations on a map, one of us read out the instructions from the memorandum furnished, while the other marked the map. This saved precious hours, and our teamwork method was proved useful by the fact that we both graduated with high marks.

In the mid-1920s, the Leavenworth course was for one year only. In May 1926, orders arrived from the Chief of Infantry (I had been retransferred) to proceed to Fort Benning to take command of a battalion. About mid-August, Mamie and I set out in a new automobile for Georgia. The quarters assigned to us at Benning were the nicest we had yet enjoyed, and as soon as the August temperatures went down, we were glad to be there. But if Georgia's temperatures declined, mine didn't. A week after I reached Benning, I was told that I would have to coach the soldier football team.

Though working with soldiers was always fun, I was getting exceedingly weary of the football-coaching interludes that were continually being inserted into my career. I asked the executive officer of the post if I could decline the responsibilities of head coach, and take charge instead of the backfield and the offensive tactics.

This was agreed, and I began working under a Texan, Captain Barry. The material at hand was raw and our season was not one to divert attention from Notre Dame, Wisconsin or West Point. Fortunately, I didn't have to face another. In mid-December the War Department ordered me to Washington, D.C., for duty in the office of General Pershing.

GENERAL PERSHING, the famed "Black Jack" and leader of our AEF (American Expeditionary Forces) in World War I, was then head of the Battle Monuments Commission. This new agency was charged with building and beautifying the cemeteries where our war dead were gathered abroad, and with preparing a battlefield guide to American actions of the war. The guidebook writing was assigned to me.

I had been in the job hardly long enough to do any damage when I was selected as a student for the War College in Washington. To graduate from the War College had long been the ambition of almost every officer, and I was anxious to go. When I graduated the following June, a choice was offered me: Did I want to be assigned to the War Department General Staff, or go back to Battle Monuments? When I learned that to complete the guidebook I would have to go to France, my choice was easy.

This was my first chance to get to know a European country. In June 1928, I saw Paris for the first time. The job involved travel, all the way from the Vosges in southeast France to the English Channel, following the lines of trench warfare. In this way, I came to see the small towns of France and to meet the sound and friendly people working in the fields and along the roads.

I often stopped to join groups of roadworkers who were eating their lunch. When my chauffeur (who was my interpreter) and I

asked if we could join them, they would offer something from their lunch boxes. In the trunk of the car we began to carry certain specialties I thought they might like—oranges or bananas or a can of artichokes. Once I had half a dozen cans of sardines and opened one as an hors d'oeuvre. They went down so swiftly and with such exclamations of delight that I opened up another. Six cans were finished off in about as many minutes.

Mamie and I had found an apartment in Paris, in the Auteuil area, overlooking the Seine and Pont Mirabeau. We became a sort of junior-size American Express for visiting Army friends and were drawn into their sight-seeing until we were looked on as authorities on what to see and what to avoid. Mamie was a specialist in shops, from the flea market to the *grands magasins*, and I tried to find spots that were different from anything the Americans were used to.

One such place was the Musée Grévin. A waxworks not quite as large as Madame Tussaud's in London, but far more gruesome, this museum of French historic characters was absorbing. I suppose I was still an unsophisticated Kansan at heart; at any rate, this place stayed in my memory as a unique Paris attraction. Twenty-five years later, after I had assumed Supreme Command of the NATO forces, I lunched with two members of the staff and lectured on the wonders of the Musée Grévin. They agreed to go. Afterward one asked the other disgustedly, "Do you *really* suppose this was the most exciting spot he could find when he was still in his thirties?"

In two tours with the American Battle Monuments Commission, I served under General Pershing for about a year and a half. I never got to know him well. He was rather reserved, even remote in manner, and he kept odd hours, often not coming to the office until one o'clock or later but staying until midnight. This must have played havoc with the social schedules of his direct subordinates. And he had one really deplorable habit: he was always late—up to an hour or more—for every engagement. When no one else was available, I acted as temporary aide and it was embarrassing to try to explain to the host why we were so late. The

General himself seemed to be oblivious to time and made no excuses.

In his later years, I would visit him in his rooms at Walter Reed Hospital. He grew weaker and weaker, but whenever he spoke from his hospital bed it was always as a senior commander. I had the impression that he was standing stiffly erect, Sam Browne belt and all. To all the veterans of World War I, General Pershing is the single hero and they remember him with respect and admiration, even if not affection. But as time goes on his place in history will probably not be as prominent as it might have been had he been more outgoing in personality. Early in life he had been the victim of a dreadful tragedy. His wife and two or three young children had been burned to death, in an Army post in Wyoming, I believe. Only one son, Warren, was left. He is a successful and respected man who, I understand, heads up a Wall Street firm.

When General Pershing died, in 1948, I went to Washington to be present at his funeral. This called for a long march from the Capitol to the cemetery at Arlington, and in the middle of the march rain began to pour down. The moment it started, cars were rushed to the head of the column to pick up the senior officers. I declined to get into the car. I was certainly not going to give an example of brass running from a rainstorm when all the marching men in the column had to take things as they came. Not in the last walk for General Pershing of the AEF.

When we returned from France in 1929, it was my hope to go back to troop duty. But there was a new role ahead. In those days there were two assistants to the Secretary of War: one was Assistant Secretary of Air; the other, and senior, was the deputy of the Secretary of War himself. One of the senior man's principal duties was to study ways of mobilizing American industry in the event of another war. To this task I was now beckoned.

Two of us, ordinarily Colonel Wilkes of the Engineers and I, visited firms which had been making fuses, ammunition or truck bodies during World War I, to see whether they could suggest improvements for retooling rapidly in case of another war. It was

difficult to arouse any interest at all. There was not going to be another war, they felt.

One of the principal questions we had to study was the organization of the government, and the War Department itself, for control of production. To find out about the experience of the War Industries Board of World War I, I went to its chief, Mr. Bernard Baruch, who was not only cooperative but anxious that all the complexities of conversion be understood. He believed that, immediately upon the outbreak of war, prices, wages, and costs of materials and services should be frozen, as a means of avoiding inflation. At the same time he advocated measures for eliminating black-marketing. I made his views part of the plans that I was charged with drawing up.

It was a long, irksome job. Many people in the War Department were flatly opposed to Mr. Baruch's ideas. High officials believed that a war should be conducted through the normal, peacetime agencies of government. They did not favor price controls.<sup>4</sup> Cooperation between the Army and Navy departments would take care of the problem, they would say.

All our experience has shown that this was convenient reasoning, and foolishness. But our antagonists persisted, and whatever we accomplished toward industrial mobilization was done on our own and in a rather isolated atmosphere. Indeed, the Chief of Staff of the Army, General Charles P. Summerall, forbade any General Staff officer even to go into the office of the Assistant Secretary of War.

Finally, late in 1930, General Summerall was succeeded by General Douglas MacArthur. The new Chief of Staff was receptive to the ideas we had been advocating, discussed the whole concept with us and assured us of his friendly cooperation. So our work received new impetus and our morale a boost.

I now began a relationship that was not to end until December 1939. General MacArthur, it developed, needed a personal military assistant who could draft statements, reports and letters for his signature. He asked me to take the job. I moved over to his office in January 1933.

Douglas MacArthur, then fifty-three, was a forceful—some thought an overpowering—individual, blessed with a fast and facile mind, interested in both the military and political side of our government. Working with him added a dimension to my experience. On any subject he chose to discuss, his knowledge, always amazingly comprehensive, poured out in a torrent of words. “Discuss” is hardly the correct word; the General’s conversations were usually monologues.

A colonel who had a fifteen-minute interview with him sat and listened, inserting an occasional yes or no, and when he left the office realized that he had forgotten to bring up the subject of his visit. Later, he encountered another officer whose appointment with MacArthur had immediately followed his, and who said, “You certainly made an impression on General MacArthur.”

Bewildered, the Colonel asked, “What in the world do you mean?”

The other officer replied, “Why, the General told me that he had just had a tremendously interesting chat with you. He said that he always looks forward to your visits because you are a fascinating conversationalist from whom he learns a great deal!”

Unquestionably, the General’s fluency and wealth of information came from his phenomenal memory, without parallel in my experience. Reading through a draft of a speech or a paper once, he could immediately repeat whole chunks of it verbatim. He had one habit that never ceased to startle me: he talked of himself in the third person— “So MacArthur went over to the Senator, and said, ‘Senator . . .’” Although I had heard of this idiosyncrasy, the sensation was unusual.

In several respects, he was a rewarding man to work for. When he gave an assignment, he never asked any questions; he never cared what kind of hours were kept; his only requirement was that the work be done. The difficulty was that I soon found myself so busy that I was in the office until 7:30 or 7:45 every night. My hours, keeping pace with his, became picturesque. But if I needed a week’s leave, all I had to do was tell him I was going away and he would make no objection.

IN JULY 1932, an event had occurred which brought the General a measure of lasting unfavorable publicity. This was the veterans' "Bonus March." Almost a decade earlier, the Congress—buffeted on one side by veterans who wanted immediate bonuses and on the other by an administration opposed to them—attempted to please both by authorizing a liberal grant for World War I service, but postponing payment until 1945. This action pleased no one, least of all the veterans. Their claims had been recognized—but they could not collect on them for more than twenty years.

We were then in the depths of a depression. As times got hard, many veterans came to think that the deferred bonus was identical to a deposit in the bank. This oversimplification, without any legal base, became an intensely emotional idea at a time when millions of families were hard pressed to feed themselves or to meet the rent. Despite the fact that almost all citizens were affected by the national calamity, some veterans seemed to feel that they were entitled to special privileges. They marched to Washington to get the promised money.

All in all, I think there were eighteen or twenty thousand men. Some were encamped outside the town, across the Anacostia River; others had taken over abandoned buildings not far from the Capitol; others built shacks out of tin cans and old lumber and the like—anything to shelter them from the bad weather. Over outdoor fires, they cooked their scanty meals.

Thirty years before demonstrations became an accepted mode of protest, the bonus veterans were pioneering direct action against Federal legislative authority. Both sides in the dispute were neophytes in conducting or facing such protests. Restraint and a degree of good humor marked the veterans' attitude. Restraint and a decent sympathy marked the government's.

For many days nothing happened, but the time arrived when the government, because of building construction going on there, had to move the marchers from the vicinity of the Capitol. The veterans refused to move, and the police could not handle such numbers. Then the President called out regular troops.

When the order was announced, General MacArthur decided that he should go into active command in the field. I told him that the matter could easily become a riot and I thought it highly inappropriate for the Chief of Staff of the Army to be involved in it. The General disagreed, saying that it was a question of Federal authority in the District of Columbia. He ordered me to get into uniform. (In that administration, officers in Washington went to work in civilian clothes, because a military appearance around the nation's capital was held to be undesirable.)

I reported back at the hour fixed by the Chief and then, with his aide and a couple of others, we went out. One of the others was George Patton, then a major commanding a squadron of cavalry at Fort Myer.

The veterans made no more vigorous protest than a little cat-calling and jeering at the soldiers, who were only performing their duty as they edged the men away from the disputed area, guiding and nudging them slowly toward the Anacostia River and the bridge over it.

Instructions were then received from the Secretary of War, forbidding any troops to cross the bridge, on the other side of which was the largest encampment of veterans. General MacArthur did not hear the instructions. He said he was too busy and did not want to be bothered by people coming down pretending to bring orders. In any event, we marched the column right on across the bridge, halting the troops on the other side. Shortly afterward, the whole encampment of shacks and huts began burning. I know that no troops started the fire; they were too far away. Some of the veterans themselves must have started the blazes to show their displeasure.

The whole scene was pitiful. The veterans, whether or not their march was a mistake, were ragged, ill-fed, and felt themselves abused. The sight of the whole encampment in flames just added to the pity one had to feel for them. The troops were dismissed except for a small group that was left to prevent any veterans from returning to the city itself. But the whole action from beginning to end did nothing to alleviate the lot of the veterans



or to enhance the reputation of the government and the Army. When General MacArthur started back to the War Department, I remarked that there would probably be reporters trying to see him, and suggested it would be the better part of wisdom to avoid them. The troop movement had not been a military idea really, but a political order, and I thought that only the political officials should talk to the press. He disagreed and saw the newspapermen that night.

I think this meeting led to the prevailing impression that General MacArthur himself had undertaken the move against the veterans. Popular impressions are hard to eradicate. I have read at least one account that called this one of the darkest blots on the MacArthur reputation. This, I feel, is unfortunate.

Ordinarily, General MacArthur would have been relieved as Chief of Staff in the fall of 1934, but because of reorganization in the War Department his tour was extended by one year. Toward the end of this year, a bill was passed in the Congress bestowing commonwealth status on the Philippine Islands for ten years. During this period the Philippine government, then headed by Manuel Quezon, would acquire increasing autonomy, as it prepared for independence in 1946.

The American decision was at that time unique. So far as I can recall, never before had a great power deliberately proposed independence at a fixed date for an occupied country except under the pressure of armed revolt.

This congressional action affected my own professional life. The wheel of fortune had made a full turn. In 1915 I was sure that the Philippines would be my first assignment. Now, Manila was to be my next destination. In the happenstance of Army life I had become associated with General MacArthur and the General was a natural candidate for a special role in the Islands.

OF ALL American names, after William Howard Taft's, MacArthur's carried weight to the point of veneration in the Philippines. His father, General Arthur MacArthur, our last military governor there, was a symbol of American might in battle and

American understanding around the conference table. The son, a general officer in our forces in the Islands before he became Chief of Staff, had won the confidence and admiration of Manuel Quezon, who now proposed that he become military adviser to the emerging nation, directing the design and buildup of its security forces. MacArthur accepted enthusiastically.

The General was very insistent that I go along with him. We had worked together for a long time, he said, and he didn't want to bring in somebody new. MacArthur even then was thought to be a mysterious, romantic figure far above the frailty of dependence on others, but this insistence, I now realize, showed that he was very like the rest of us. In the decades that followed, I came to understand this fully. Whatever our position, whatever the power we exercise under the weight of responsibility, we need familiar faces about us as much as we need expert opinion or wise counsel.

I did not succeed in getting from General MacArthur a fixed period for the assignment. One privilege he did permit, possibly realizing that a familiar face meant as much to me as to him. I could pick one associate from the Regular Army to go along with us. I requested Major James Ord, whom I wanted not only for his quickness of mind and ability as a staff officer but because he was as much at home in Spanish—the principal language of the Philippines after Tagalog—as he was in English. Jimmy Ord was eager to go.

### *With Mac-Arthur in the Philippines*

AT THE very outset of our mission, MacArthur suffered two shocks. The first struck while we were still en route to the West Coast. One moment Douglas MacArthur was Chief of Staff of the United States Army, whose arrival in Manila would be dramatic testimony that our country considered Philippine independence and defense of prime importance. The next moment, after he tore open a telegram from Washington, he learned that

he was now only a former Chief of Staff, and was reduced from four-star to two-star rank.

Firmly fixed in the General's mind had been the conviction that President Roosevelt had agreed to retain him in the top position until a month after his arrival in Manila. The prestige of those four stars in the eyes of the Filipinos would have been a certain help, he thought. He would be retiring as Chief of Staff to aid the new cause. Suddenly, out of the clear, to learn that a new COS had been appointed caused an explosive denunciation of F.D.R., politics, bad manners, bad judgment, broken promises, arrogance, unconstitutionality, insensitivity. Then he sent an eloquent telegram of congratulations to his successor.

In the long run, no harm may have been done to our mission, except for personal resentments. The second blow had a far more deeply personal effect on the General. It deprived him of a lifelong source of inspiration and strength, his mother.

The widow of General Arthur MacArthur was among the most remarkable of Army wives and mothers. All her life she had been with the Army and she was certain that her son was destined for greatness; she lived for him and his success. The General relied on her when the going was tough, and he shared with her the joys of achievement.

Shortly after we boarded the SS *President Harding*, she became ill. Not long after our arrival in Manila, she was dead. The loss affected the General's spirit for many months.

WE SETTLED temporarily in a Manila hotel. The Ords and their two children soon found a house, but because Mamie had decided to stay in Washington, so that John could finish the eighth grade, I continued to live in the hotel. They would join me when the term was over, and next year John would go to school in Baguio, in the mountains above Manila.

From the outset, the work was difficult. Trying to figure ways to provide a reasonable defense establishment once the Islands were on their own, we started to build little training stations in various sections of the Islands. We built more than ninety of

these, with about two hundred conscripts in each. We soon saw that it would be necessary to have a small "air force"—if only to get to the training stations scattered over the archipelago.

Though we worked doggedly through 1936 and 1937, ours was a hopeless venture in a sense. The Philippine government simply could not afford to build real security from attack. We had to content ourselves with attempting to produce a military adequate to deal with domestic revolt and to slow up any aggressor until some friendly nation, presumably the United States, came to its aid. Among other things, we were encountering an example of the costs of independence that others have met more recently. Many Filipinos were concerned too much with the privileges of freedom and too little with its responsibilities. President Quezon understood this fully but he also insisted that national pride would demand some kind of military force.

Then came an incident that chilled the warm relationship Jimmy Ord and I had had with General MacArthur. The General thought that morale would be enhanced if the people of Manila could see something of their emerging army. He suggested bringing units from all over the Islands to a field near the city, and camping them there for three or four days. The city's population could visit them and it would all end with a big parade.

Jimmy and I told the General that this would take money that was desperately needed for more important purposes. But, following his order, we began to do the necessary staff work. Among other details, we had to arrange with island shipping firms to bring in the troops. It wasn't long until news of this reached President Quezon, who called me in and asked me what it was all about.

I was astonished. We had assumed that the project had first been agreed on between the President and General MacArthur. Now I said I thought we should not discuss it until I had seen the General. But Quezon was disturbed and said he would telephone him. When I returned to the office, the General was exceedingly unhappy with his entire staff. He said he had never meant us to proceed with preparations for the parade, only to make

investigations. Now President Quezon was horrified that we were planning a costly national parade in the capital. Because General MacArthur denied he had given us an order—which was news to us—there was nothing to do except stop the proceedings. This misunderstanding caused considerable resentment, and never again were we on the same warm and cordial terms.

Not long after this, Jimmy Ord was killed in an airplane accident. From then on more of the planning and the responsibility fell on me, but without my friend all the zest was gone.

President Quezon asked for my advice more and more. This was partly because of the office hours General MacArthur liked to keep. He never reached his desk until eleven; after a late lunch hour, he went home again. This made it difficult to get in touch with him. My friendship with the President became close, and our conversations broader and deeper. Taxes, education, honesty in government, all sorts of subjects entered the discussions and he seemed to enjoy them. Certainly I did.

From time to time I suffered attacks of a strange intestinal ailment. For a long while I was on a bland diet, but I gradually drifted back to old habits. As a result, I suffered at least two more attacks after the first serious one in 1936. When, twenty years later, I had an attack requiring surgery, the doctors had a name for it: ileitis.

In 1938 my family and I went back to the United States briefly. I wanted to ask the War Department for more help. I went to the Chief of Staff, General Malin Craig, and told him General MacArthur's view that a friendly Philippines, able to provide at least delaying action in the event of invasion, was vital to the United States. General Craig agreed and hitherto closed doors began to open.

It has to be remembered that the American Army itself was starved for appropriations at that time. There wasn't much it could do for the Philippines without undercutting U.S. preparedness. After begging or borrowing everything I could in the way of obsolete but still useful equipment from the Signal, Quartermaster, Ordnance and Medical groups, I went to Wichita and

with the limited funds available bought several planes. I also visited the Winchester Repeating Arms Company in Connecticut. With what I had "liberated" and bought, I went back to Manila.

There was by now a general uneasiness about the possibility of war. It was almost universally conceded that a European war would rapidly become global, and apprehension grew sharply in the Philippines. General MacArthur did his best to allay fears, assuring the Filipinos, for example, that the Japanese were rational and that it would be to their disadvantage to attack. At the same time, he speeded up the military training program.

I became certain that the conflict General Conner had predicted fifteen years earlier was likely to break out. And so when Chamberlain declared a state of war between Great Britain and Germany, I went to General MacArthur at once. "General," I said, "in my opinion the United States cannot remain out of this war for long. I want to go home as soon as possible."

MacArthur said that I was making a mistake, and Quezon was emphatic that I should remain. But both finally accepted my decision and Quezon gave us a beautiful farewell luncheon in the Malacañan Palace before Mamie, young John and I departed by liner. We spent Christmas in Hawaii and New Year's Eve in San Francisco, in an extravagance of blaring horns and glitter that marked, though we didn't know it, the end of an era of peaceful family life together. Ahead for Mamie lay long and lonely months when both her son and her husband would be far off; and for me, years that would be thronged with challenges for which all my life I had been preparing.

### *The Strides again*

My ORDERS had been for Fort Lewis, Washington. I found myself instead on temporary planning duty under General John L. DeWitt in San Francisco. I was to work out schedules for shipping and housing and feeding National Guard and Regular troops for the entire West Coast, who were to be brought for emergency train-

ing to southern California. Meanwhile, Mamie and I had registered John, now seventeen, in the high school in Tacoma, believing we were to be on duty there. Fortunately, that was where my brother Ed lived, so we let John stay with him until we should be free to go to Fort Lewis.

The Fort Lewis assignment restored me to active duty with troops—the 15th Regiment of the 3rd Infantry Division—and confirmed my conviction that this was where I belonged. I made my desires for continued service with troops clear to every Army friend I met, particularly anyone from Washington who was involved in personnel decisions. A letter from Patton, saying that he expected to get one of the new armored divisions and would ask for me as a regimental commander, raised my hopes to outright elation.

On the last day of November, however, with Pearl Harbor twelve months and one week off, my active service with troops came to an end. Orders arrived detailing me to the General Staff Corps, assigned to duty as Chief of Staff, 3rd Division, Fort Lewis. I was back on the staff—but at least I wasn't in Washington, D.C. To that extent I felt lucky.

It was about this time that John told us he wanted to try for West Point. I thought it wise to point out the possible advantages of a civilian education. If he could develop as a lawyer, doctor or businessman, he could go as far as his character, abilities and ambitions could carry him. In the Army, no matter how able an officer might be, his promotion was governed strictly by the rule of seniority until he reached the grade of colonel. I added, however, that my own Army experience had been wonderfully interesting and had brought me into contact with men of ability, honor, and a sense of high dedication to their country. Happy in my work, I had long ago refused to bother my head about promotions and had remained untempted by generous business offers that had come my way.

A few days after this conversation, my brother Ed dropped in. Edgar's law business in Tacoma was thriving and, he told me, he had offered John a proposition: "If you'll go to college for four

years, and then through three years of law, I'll pay your entire educational expenses. If you join my law firm, I'll pay you twice your military salary at any comparable stage in your career—until you're earning more. Then you're on your own."

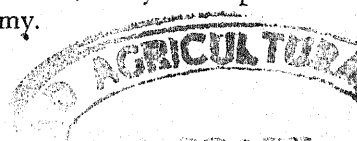
Ed said to me rather ruefully, "You know, that young devil just looked me in the eye and said, 'Thanks, Uncle Ed. I appreciate your offer. But I've decided to try for West Point.'"

Later John told me his reasons. "When you talked about the satisfaction you had in an Army career, and your pride in being associated with men of character, my mind was made up. If I can say the same thing when I've finished my Army career, I'll care no more about promotions than you did."

However little I cared about promotions, several were coming up for me in rapid succession. When in March 1941 my duties at Fort Lewis were enlarged, as Chief of Staff to the IX Army Corps, I was promoted to temporary colonel. Only a few months later I was transferred to San Antonio—Mamie and I arrived there on our twenty-fifth anniversary—and by August I was Chief of Staff of the Third Army under General Walter Krueger.

General Krueger's command, which stretched from New Mexico to Florida, had a strength that could be mobilized of 240,000 officers and men. During August and September we concentrated these forces in Louisiana and undertook maneuvers against the Second Army, commanded by General Ben Lear. Old Louisiana hands warned us that ahead lay mud, mosquitoes and malaria. Their description was accurate—we had many problems—but the work was gripping.

The lack of practical experience was particularly evident. World War I staff men of all echelons above regimental commander had largely passed out of the service. The rest of us had to transform textbook doctrine into action. After each stage of the maneuvers, we tried to assemble the principal officers for a critique. In these chats we emphasized everything that went right: encouragement was essential to morale. At the same time, we had to uncover and highlight every mistake, every foul-up that in war could be death to a unit or an army.





My tent turned into something of a cracker-barrel corner where everyone in our army seemed to come for a serious discussion, a laugh, or a gripe. I never discouraged those who complained, for often they worked much better after they had unloaded their woes. I was also kept up-to-date with Army humor. This revolved largely around the simulations of reality in maneuvers. The granddaddy of them all, I think, was this one:

An umpire decided that a bridge had been destroyed by an enemy attack and flagged it accordingly. From then on, it was not to be used by men or vehicles. Shortly, a corporal brought his squad up to the bridge, looked at the flag, hesitated, then marched his men across. The umpire yelled at him, "Hey, don't you see that bridge is destroyed?"

The Corporal answered, "Of course I can see it's destroyed. Can't you see we're swimming?"

I passed that on in a letter to my friend and Leavenworth classmate, Leonard Gerow, now in the War Department. Then I said:

Handling an Army staff that has had very little chance to whip itself together has its tough points—in spite of which I am having a good time. But I would like a command of my own.

When the maneuvers ended, I got, instead of a command, the star of a brigadier general.

While in Louisiana we heard how narrowly we had escaped a legislative failure: in Congress, the extension of Selective Service had been passed by a single vote. It was reported that one man, General George Marshall, was largely responsible for this victory, however slim. I still shudder to think how close we came to returning trained men home and closing down the reception centers for draftees, all within weeks of our entry into the most colossal war of all time.

After eating lunch on Sunday, December 7, my ambition was short-range. I wanted to capitalize on the afternoon lull and take a long nap. The nap did not last long. Orders that I was not to be awakened were ignored by my aide, who wisely decided that the

attack on Pearl Harbor was adequate reason to interrupt my rest.

Five days later I was suddenly summoned to Washington by General Marshall for "emergency duty." The telephone message was only, "The Chief says for you to hop a plane and get up here right away." Mamie hurriedly packed a bag for me, and I took a train to Washington, where I reported to the Chief of Staff on December 14, 1941.

DURING the tumultuous months I spent in the War Department, in the Planning Section and later as Chief of Operations, I was with General Marshall every day. Realizing the burden he uncompainingly carried, I soon conceived an unlimited admiration—and affection—for him. But George Marshall was rather a remote and austere person. He was one man who never, except on one unwary occasion, used my nickname, but addressed me always as "Eisenhower."

One day he gave me a bit of his philosophy on the subject of promotion. "The men who are going to get the promotions in this war," he said, "are the commanders in the field, not the staff officers who clutter up all the administrative machinery in the War Department."

It seemed to him that in World War I the staff had been favored ahead of the field commanders who carried the responsibility, and he planned to reverse the process. Then, possibly because he realized that I had been brought in from the field on his personal order, he turned to my case. "I know that you were recommended by one general for division command and by another for corps command," he said. "I'm glad they have that opinion of you, but you are going to stay right here and fill your position, and that's that! While this may seem a sacrifice to you, that's the way it must be."

The frustration I had felt in 1918 because of my failure to get overseas returned. By his words, I was condemned to a Washington desk for the duration. I impulsively broke out: "General, I'm interested in what you say, but I want you to know that I don't give a damn about your promotion plans as far as I'm concerned."

I came into this office from the field and I am trying to do my duty. I expect to do so as long as you want me here. If that locks me to a desk for the rest of the war, so be it!"

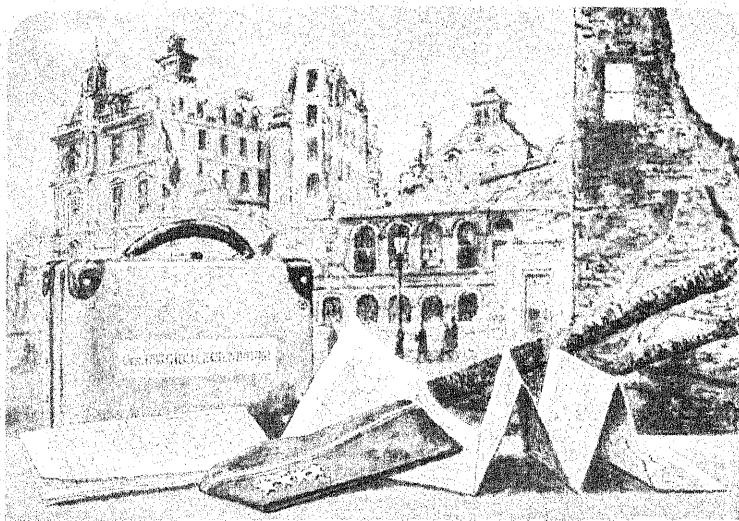
I got up and marched toward the door. When I reached it, something impelled me to turn around and grin a little sheepishly at my childishness. A tiny smile quirked the corner of his mouth as I turned to leave the office.

About three days later I was startled to find on my desk a copy of the General's recommendation to the President that I be promoted. As I read, I was even more amazed. He had told the President that, as his operations officer, I was not really a staff officer in the accepted sense. Under his direction, he said, all dispositions of Army forces on a global scale—including the Air Force—were my responsibility. I was his *subordinate commander*.

Had the years of indoctrinating myself on the inconsequential value of promotion as the measure of an Army man's worth influenced the way I had spoken to the General? Certainly, I had always known a wonderful freedom from awe in the presence of superior officers. But I often wonder whether without my outburst General Marshall would have had any greater interest in me than in any other relatively competent staff officer. In any case, I was now a major general.

General Marshall then asked me to draft a directive for a Commanding General for our forces in Europe. I did so. When he asked me to recommend a commander I proposed the Air Force's General McNarney. Instead, he sent me. The desk job in Washington was behind me. In London, commanding the European Theater of Operations, I was to be brought up close to the war.

What might be called my official reminiscences of World War II have been recorded in *Crusade in Europe*. But during the war there were incidents that provided a break in tension, some insight, or some amusement that I think I did not report. I am by no means going back to scan every line to see whether I have been guilty of duplication. Here I am telling stories principally for the pleasure of it, and it's fun just to wander with no worries about repetitions, or "literary criticism."



## V INCIDENTS AT WAR

### *Lighting the Torch*

WAR, AS so many men have said, is the most stupid and tragic of human ventures. It is stupid because so few problems are enduringly solved, tragic because its cost in lives and spirit and treasure is seldom matched in the fruits of victory. Still, I never intend to join with those who damn all wars as crimes against humanity.

World War II, not sought by the people of the United States or its allies, was not, on their part, either stupid or in vain. Satisfaction, and memories precious beyond price, rewarded those who survived and who, in loyalty to country and to ideals, answered the attacks. But the loss of lives that might have been creatively lived scars the mind of the modern world.

In England, in July 1942, our future was murky and foreboding. Russia's Crimean fortress of Sevastopol had fallen to the Nazis, who could now plunge ahead into the Caucasus, to exploit

their vast oil resources for further conquest. In Africa, the Nile delta was only a few hours from Rommel's advance Panzer units. Tobruk, symbol of British staunchness, had been lost again with all its men and guns.

It was decided that American forces should invade French North Africa, clean out resistance from Morocco to Tunisia, and then cooperate with the British under General Alexander, who would advance from the east, driving Rommel before them. Prime Minister Churchill thought that, because of difficulties between the British and French since France surrendered in 1940, this expedition should be as American in appearance as possible. At a London meeting of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, therefore, I was put in command of Operation TORCH.

After a preliminary survey of the problem, I concluded that we should make the landing in French North Africa so overwhelming in strength and so secretly prepared and executed that hopefully no bloodshed would ensue. TORCH, though, hardly began as a flaming success.

Throughout the war, I was always amazed that tens upon tens of thousands of tons of supply, from safety pins to tanks, reached their destination with dispatch. But through a crazy mixture of mistakes and oversights in the United States, the first materiel for the North African invasion arrived without one crate properly labeled. It was necessary to go through every package, item by item, before we could have the faintest idea what was on hand and what was missing.

For the drive on Algiers, all signal equipment for the *entire* task force had been put on one ship. When that vessel was shot up by an enemy ship, the task force was badly embarrassed. We rapidly learned to disperse specialized equipment.

More and more, I came to realize that brainpower is always in far shorter supply than manpower. The staff around me included intelligent officers who thought no problem beyond their ability to solve, no work load too heavy to endure. But such men became all too rare as the magnitude of our mission built up. Late in August, I wrote a classmate:

Solid, sound leadership, with inexhaustible nervous energy to spur on the efforts of lesser men, and ironclad determination to face discouragement . . . will always characterize the man who has a sure-enough, bang-up fighting unit. Added to this he must have a darned strong tinge of imagination—I am continuously astounded by the utter lack of imaginative thinking among so many of our people who have reputations for being really good officers. Finally, the man has to be able to forget himself and personal fortunes. I've relieved two seniors here because they got to worrying about "injustice," "unfairness," and "prestige."

Our landings in North Africa were fairly successful. Hoping to make the local French our allies again, we tried to persuade their commanders to sign an armistice. But they felt that honor required them to resist, unless authorized to quit by a direct representative of Marshal Pétain. Enter Admiral Darlan—and the start of one of the most discussed episodes in the six-month campaign.

A member of Pétain's cabinet, Admiral Darlan was taken as a political prisoner by our troops. Because he was one of the Vichy French and believed to have collaborated with the Nazis out of enmity to the British, I wanted nothing to do with him. But the local French military leaders insisted that only he could give them legal cover for a cease-fire. I was faced with my first "political" problem as a commander. If we were to go on and defeat the local French forces, we would also defeat our hope of making the French in Africa our allies—and that would hamper us in seizing Tunisia before the Axis forces. If, on the other hand, I dealt with Darlan, the public outcry could embarrass the British and American governments. To deal or not to deal . . .

In my offices in the dank and dripping tunnels of Gibraltar, my advisers and I discussed the question at length. Then I went off alone for an hour or so, and returned to announce the first major political decision I ever made:

The military advantages of an immediate cease-fire are so overwhelming that . . . I shall immediately recognize Darlan as the highest French authority in the region. He can act as the in-

terim head of such civil government as exists, on condition that he carries out any orders I may issue. . . . I'll do my best to convince our governments . . . that the decision was right. If they find it necessary later to take action against this headquarters, I'll make it clear that I alone am responsible.

The outcries came. Most of the time, I was too busy to worry about them. But at the height of the furor about the "Darlan deal," I did reflect uneasily that charges of incompetence as a political man, a role for which I had little training and little liking, could end my career. The search for a scapegoat is the easiest of all hunting expeditions. President Roosevelt and Prime Minister Churchill, however, both saw the situation clearly and each effectively explained the circumstances to their countrymen. Their support, and the fact that we simply went ahead with the job at hand, meant that no heads would roll.

It didn't occur to me then that I would spend part of my life after the war trying to sort out facts from hoked-up fiction. As early warning that the printed word is not always the whole truth, there was a story in *Yank*, the newspaper edited by and for our troops, which purported to describe activities at my headquarters as we prepared for the African landings:

The General, they say, was calm as a cucumber the whole time. He liked doing his own packing and hung up his own clothes. As for giving his batmen and orderlies an easy time, there wasn't much preparing involved in the General's favorite sandwich—raw beef with onions and plenty of pepper. One London newspaper said that General Eisenhower—a Texan and former cowboy himself when he worked his way through the University of Texas—even managed to indulge in a little of his favorite reading (wild West stories) while he was planning this vast campaign.

This may have been the origin of all the succeeding reports that I never read anything but Westerns. If so, I wonder that the other two bits of information were not as permanently incor-

porated into my public personality. Cartoons and sketches of the President devouring raw-meat sandwiches at his desk, or of Ike galloping on a cow pony around the White House lawn, would have provided a change of pace from the golf clubs with which I was usually armed.

THE WINTER of 1942-43 we worked harder than ever before. My headquarters was at Algiers. The battle line lay hundreds of miles to the east. Anxious to keep in touch with the front, I made frequent trips there, sometimes in a DC-3 but often, because of weather, by automobile—a long, tedious journey that took thirty-six hours. I became run-down and life was not improved by a murderous case of flu.

I was still carrying a high temperature when General Marshall visited the African front after the Casablanca conference of Allied leaders in 1943. He said he was worried about me. "You're trying to do too much. You're making too many trips to the front. You ought to depend more on reports." He looked at me rather fiercely. "You ought to have a man to be your eyes and ears."

The suggestion had appeal. It would have to be someone of ability, someone I could trust, someone of high enough rank to go into any headquarters. We began to go over names of officers who might fit. When he mentioned Bradley, I said, "Go no farther."

General Omar Bradley was not only a favorite classmate of mine at West Point, but a man I had admired throughout his military career. When he reached my headquarters, there began a close and enduring association that proved invaluable to me. Of all the ground commanders I have known, or even read about, I would put Omar Bradley in the highest classification. Patton, for instance, was a master of fast and overwhelming pursuit; headlong by nature, and fearlessly aggressive, he was the more colorful figure of the two. Bradley, however, was outstanding in every aspect of military command. As an attack leader and a defensive bulwark, I have yet to meet his equal.

He was not my "eyes and ears" for long. I needed his qualities



so badly in command positions that I soon asked him to take over the II Corps. Later, of course, he became commander of the First Army, and in 1944, of the Twelfth Army group in Operation OVERLORD, the Allied invasion of northwestern Europe.

THE COMPLICATIONS of Allied command were intriguing. A small event that illustrated the difficulty of getting everybody agreed to launch any action was the campaign against a tiny island called Pantelleria, halfway between the northern tip of Tunisia and the island of Sicily. Said to be the Gibraltar of the central Mediterranean, it was heavily garrisoned by Italians, and thought by many to be unassailable.

There were other elements to consider, I thought. With the island's landing strip in possession of the enemy, our convoys, then going across from Africa to Sicily, were subject to strafing and dive-bomber attack; and we of course were denied the use of the field for our own operations. Believing that the Italian Army was sick of the war and that its morale was at a low ebb, I insisted on attempting the island's capture.

My immediate staff agreed. British ground commanders were doubtful. The attitude of Alexander and Montgomery was, "We must not risk a failure." I had to proceed cautiously to persuade my British associates that I was not going completely crazy.

We began full-scale bombardment of the island. To get a better picture, Admiral Andrew Cunningham and I went up with the bombarding fleet from Tunisia to simulate an attack. The reaction to this was so feeble that I said, "Andrew, if you and I got into a small boat, we could capture the place ourselves." When the attack was finally made, the men in our ships had not even completed getting into their landing craft when white flags began to appear.

Winston Churchill, by the way, was convinced that there were not more than three thousand Italians on the island. Our intelligence reports showed eleven thousand. He said, "If you'll give me a *centesimo* for every soldier fewer than three thousand, I'll give you one for each man more than three thousand."

At the surrender on June 11, 1943, we got almost exactly eleven thousand. Winston paid off the debt, remarking in a note that at this rate he would buy all the Italians I could capture. I think the entire settlement came to about \$1.60.

AFTER the Sicilian campaign and the landings in Italy, fighting went on during the winter, and we prepared to receive our political bosses. There was to be a conference at Cairo, followed by one with Marshal Stalin at Teheran; Stalin refused to go farther west. At Cairo, General Marshall told me to take two days off. I pleaded work, but he said, "Look, Eisenhower, just let someone else run that war up there for a couple of days. If your subordinates can't do it for you, you haven't organized them properly." So I used the two days to go up the Nile to the Valley of the Kings and to go to Jerusalem.

And when I got back to my headquarters, after the President had left the Teheran conference, I received a tattered piece of paper that, sealed in plastic, is one of my war souvenirs. At the bottom, General Marshall had written:

Cairo, Dec. 7, '43

Dear Eisenhower. I thought you might like to have this as a memento. It was written very hurriedly by me as the final meeting broke up yesterday, the President signing it immediately.

G.C.M.

And at the top of the paper, these few words:

From the President to Marshal Stalin

The immediate appointment of General Eisenhower to command of Overlord operation has been decided upon

Roosevelt

Now events moved rapidly for me. After a last visit to the Italian Front and two visits with Mr. Churchill—one at Carthage, where he had a heavy cold, and another at Marrakesh, where he had pneumonia—I flew to Washington for two blessed weeks. There were conferences with the Chiefs of Staff, with the Presi-

dent, and a chance to see my family. Mamie and I had a secret meeting with John at West Point and I went to see my mother and brothers in Kansas.

The day before leaving, I had a long conversation with President Roosevelt, who was in bed with influenza. (At times, it must appear, the entire high command, civilian and military, was suffering from illness. Perhaps fatigue and responsibility were taking their toll.) We discussed the final division of Germany. I suggested that we avoid dividing Germany into zones and arrange for a military government under a coalition of the Western Allies and the Russians. I felt that any division of the country would make administration difficult. I also thought it would be far from certain that we could bring about the withdrawal of all Soviet troops when the time came for civilian authorities to take over.

The President made light of my fears. He had no doubt whatsoever about the eventual restoration of a satisfactory German government under the aegis of the occupying powers. What concerned him more than any relationships with the Soviets was that American troops should occupy Germany's northwestern rather than southwestern sector. He felt there was little in the southwest except "scenery," while the northwest contained the Ruhr's productivity. I repeated my opinion that if we divided the country into occupational zones we'd have trouble. He finally said that this was one point he had already decided.

Even though confined to bed, he was zestful and, as he had since our second meeting, called me Ike. He asked me whether I liked the new title, Supreme Commander, and I acknowledged that it had a ring of importance, something like Sultan. He bade me *adios*. It was our last meeting.

It is well for man to avoid superstitions, gossip, rumors and possible portents. If I had taken what greeted me on arrival in London on January 16, 1944, as a portent, I should have turned back. The fog was the worst I had ever encountered. Our automobile lights could not penetrate the heavy, yellowish curtain, so two or three men who were familiar with the area led the way to

the hotel on foot. The next day my entire personal staff tried to get me to the new office. It was quite an experience. After reaching the address, two men got lost between the car and the front door. I was warned that near the door was an area-way into which anyone could fall. I called out that we would all stand still until one man made it to the door. He did, and by a dim glow from the interior we made our way inside 20 Grosvenor Square.

A genuinely auspicious sign was the presence of General Walter Bedell Smith to be my chief lieutenant during the intensely busy period of planning for Operation OVERLORD. I had communicated with General Patton and invited him to join us. But I told him that if he did so, his and Bradley's positions would be reversed, with Bradley commanding a group of armies and Patton a single one. He did not hesitate a second and I was happy to have him. After all, we had been friends for twenty-five years. There came a time when we needed all the friendship we could muster.

George Patton loved to shock people. Anything that popped into his mind came promptly out of his mouth. Not long after his arrival in England, he attended a meeting which he thought was off-the-record. He made a statement to the effect that after the war Britain and America would have to rule the world and other nations would have to conform. There was a newspaperman present and the story made vivid headlines.

All kinds of protests arose and General Marshall cabled to say I would have to decide this one on my own. I made up my mind to hang on to Patton, but to let him suffer for a week or so to impress upon him that he could not sound off this way and still be a worthwhile commander in a great Allied organization. George would sweat, I knew, because if there was one thing he wanted it was to continue in the war. So, after an interval, I sent for him, told him that I had decided to keep him on, but that he had to learn to keep his mouth shut on political matters.

Patton always lived at one extreme or another of the emotional spectrum. He was either laughing and full of enthusiasm, or filled with remorse and despondency. When I gave him the verdict, tears streamed down his face. He promised he would be

a model of discretion and, in a gesture of almost little-boy contriteness, he put his head on my shoulder. This caused his helmet to fall off—a gleaming helmet I sometimes thought he wore to bed. As it rolled across the room, I prayed that no one would walk in on this ridiculous situation.

Without embarrassment, George picked up his helmet, adjusted it and saluted. “Sir, could I go back to my headquarters?”

“Yes,” I said, “right after you have lunch with me.”

### *Across the Channel*

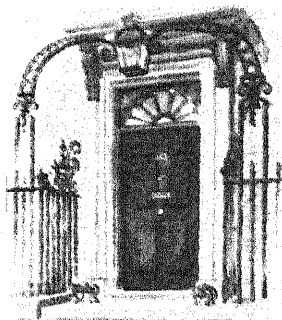
WE ALL think back to Sir Winston Churchill as a man who bespoke confidence. There can be no question but that his presence in the British Isles, a presence of the spirit as much as of the mind, is responsible for the fact that those Isles survive today, so that their phenomenally distinguished history reaches on through the present. But Winston was a human being and there were moments when none of us could be sure of success.

On my return to London in January 1944, the Prime Minister and I formed a habit of meeting at least twice a week. There was luncheon on Tuesday and dinner with the Chiefs of Staff and others on Friday. Occasionally, the dinner became a weekend at Chequers, the Prime Minister's country residence.

At these meetings, tension and anxiety were inescapable. Across the Channel, the Nazis had through four years been fortifying beaches and ports. These were supported by mobile reserves which could be rushed to any point we chose to assault, concentrating masses of armor and infantry against the relatively small numbers we could land by sea or air. Our lines of support, on the other hand, would be subject to fatal interruptions by stormy weather, by undersea attack, and, it was rumored, by assault from new projectiles whose range and speed would change the nature of war. For the sort of attack before us we had no precedent in history. OVERLORD was a singular military expedition and a fearsome risk.

In the early spring of 1944, the Prime Minister was not over-sold on its value. He felt that it would be far better to wait for more significant signs of German collapse. In the confines of an intimate meeting, he would say, "When I think of the beaches of Normandy choked with the flower of American and British youth, and when, in my mind's eye, I see the tides running red with their blood, I have my doubts . . . I have my doubts." But he would never show pessimism in public.

Bradley and I were convinced that we would not have unusual losses. On the contrary, our confidence grew by leaps and



bounds. Our bombing operations were damaging German communications, cutting into their supplies of fuel, destroying both equipment and production capacity. Meanwhile, the Russians were making inroads on the Eastern Front, and there was little opportunity for Hitler to reinforce the west.

This optimism radiated. Winston said, "General, it is good for commanders to be optimistic, else they would never win a battle. I must say to you if by the time snow flies you have established your thirty-odd divisions, now in Britain, safely on the Normandy coast and have the port of Cherbourg firmly in your grasp, I will be the first to proclaim that this was a gigantic and wonderfully conducted military campaign." He added: "If by Christmas you have succeeded in liberating our beloved Paris, if she can by that

time take her accustomed place as a center of western European culture and beauty, then I will proclaim that this operation is the most grandly conceived and best conducted known to the history of warfare."

I replied, "Mr. Prime Minister, we expect to be on the borders of Germany by Christmas, pounding away at her defenses. When that occurs, if Hitler has the slightest judgment or wisdom left, he will surrender unconditionally to avoid complete destruction of Germany." I smiled. "I bet General Montgomery five pounds that we would end the war in Europe by the end of 1944. I have no reason to want to hedge that bet."

The Prime Minister's mouth curved upward into a splendid smile. "My dear General, I pray you are right." Ultimately, we held two substantial command conferences to review our expectations for OVERLORD. At one of these there was assembled as much rank as may ever have been gathered for an operational briefing. Present were the King of England, his Prime Minister, several of the War Cabinet, all the British Chiefs of Staff, and all senior commanders of the proposed operation.

The meeting was also notable because of a statement by the Prime Minister. The presentations over, he said, "I am hardening toward this enterprise." The smell of victory was in the air.

EVEN before I was installed in London, the British had offered warm hospitality. In the spring of 1942, General Mark Clark and others had accompanied me on an inspection trip to Britain, and one Sunday afternoon we were given an opportunity to visit Windsor Castle. The Constable, Lord Wigram, was our host. The Royal Family knew of our visit, he told us, and to avoid any embarrassment to us they were remaining in their apartment for the afternoon. He could thus freely show us all the interesting places, including those which the Royal Family normally used for recreation on fair days.

Weeks later, I was fortunate enough to be presented to the King. When he recalled that some time back I had been to the castle, he laughed and said he had a story to tell me.

His promise to Lord Wigram that the Royal Family would remain inside during our visit had slipped the King's mind. The day had been sunny, so the entire family had decided to have tea in the garden. Sitting at the table, they glanced up the hill and saw, just over its crest, the bobbing heads of four men, one very tall—this would be General Clark—and one who was Lord Wigram. The King instantly remembered his promise. Should Lord Wigram get a glimpse of the Royal Family, the tour would be terminated and we might miss something the Constable wanted to show us. The King exclaimed, "This is terrible, we must not be seen." The question was: What to do?

The first thing they did was to jump quickly down on their hands and knees. This put them outside the line of vision of the party moving up the hill. The courtyard was surrounded by a stone wall; by keeping close to the ground, they could stay concealed until they reached the wall and in its shelter could go on toward their quarters. So the Royal Family of England crawled on hands and knees to the wall, made their way to the castle door and disappeared inside.

When the King told me this story, he laughed uproariously and I couldn't help joining him. "Your Majesty," I said, "if all Americans could hear that story just as you've told it, I can assure you that never again will a man be elected mayor of Chicago by running against the King of England."

At the same outdoor luncheon, George Patton was seated directly across from the King. The King asked him if he had ever shot anyone with the pistols he was wearing.

George said promptly, "Oh yes." But he added, "Really, not these pistols. These are the ones I carry socially. I carry my fighting pistols when I'm out on campaign."

"How many men have you killed in war?" asked the King.

Without batting an eye, George said, "Seven, Sir."

This was too much for me. "How many, General Patton?"

Instantly he replied, "Three, Sir."

"Well, George," I said, "I'll let you get away with that." George had often told me that during the Pershing expedition into



Mexico in 1916, he and a small cavalry patrol ran into a handful of Villa's brigands and in the melee he shot one of the enemy.

The King was popular with all the American forces, as were his Queen and his mother. He liked the simple life of a soldier and was perfectly at home with all of us. At the end of the war, he asked me to come to Buckingham Palace about teatime, mentioning that he wanted to see me privately for a few minutes in his office before we took tea with the Queen.

The reason for those few moments proved to be the presentation of one of the most prized decorations in Britain, the Order of Merit. As I recall, only twelve men in the services and twelve civilians can hold the Order at any one time. Having handed me the decoration, the King passed me a sealed letter, asking me not to read it until I'd left the palace. When I was free to open it, I found, to my amazement and pleasure, that he had written it in longhand. It was an expression of his and his people's gratitude for my war services. I have always held it as one of the most appreciated of all awards given me by any foreign government.

The privilege of command allowed me to meet kings, queens, presidents, ambassadors, and a rotund fellow named George Allen. We might never have met except for Mr. Allen's curious gift for prophecy.

George Allen had been made Chairman of the Prisoner of War Committee of the American Red Cross. A few days before I reached London, he was sent by the President on an inspection trip to the United Kingdom. In London a dinner was given in his honor by the American Ambassador, Mr. Winant. The Americans present were hungry for news and gossip from their nation's capital. George, a constant storyteller, gave them the latest servings of both, until someone said, "Who are the American generals likely to be prominent on this side of the water?"

Allen, who had no connection with the Army, stalled for time. Then he had an inspiration. His wife and Mamie had been friends in Washington in 1935, though he and I had never met. He suddenly remembered, from a newspaper account of the Louisiana maneuvers of 1941, that Colonel Eisenhower had earned a pro-

motion to brigadier general. On the spur of the moment, he blurted, "Watch Eisenhower." Then, to demonstrate his knowledge further, he proceeded to enlarge on my personality.

Early the following morning, one of the guests called George and said, "Why didn't you tell us? Why were you so coy?"

Allen sleepily muttered, "Tell you what?"

"That Eisenhower was coming here in command?"

George was suddenly wide-awake. "Well, I would have been badly criticized if I had let it out before the General got here."

George saw only one way to save his reputation in official London circles. An old friend of his, Commander Harry Butcher, worked at headquarters, so he telephoned Butcher and told him the story. "Butch," he said, "I've just got to be seen with the General, otherwise people will call me the phony that I really am."

Butcher invited George to headquarters. He told me he had a friend there from Washington whose wife knew mine, and I might like to send a message back. He added quietly that his friend was in a bit of difficulty and perhaps I could help.

I agreed to see the friend and found a man of considerable avoirdupois, with a sparkle in his eye. He told me his story. "General," he continued, "I'm putting myself at your mercy. If I could just be *seen* coming out of your office with you, or if a little item could be put in the paper that Mr. Allen had called on the new commanding general, this would do the trick."

Mr. Allen's obvious distress, and his anxiety to avoid fame as a teller of fairy tales, made me laugh. "I'll tell you what we will do. I'll have Butcher arrange a luncheon at Claridge's with you on my right and a couple of military friends at the table."

His gratitude was overwhelming. Butcher arranged the luncheon and we all sat down together and had a wonderful time. It was one of the few times I dined in public during the war.

After that, George and I became friends. Now and then we would have a game of bridge. One evening we started out with only a single deck—for some reason it was difficult to keep two around my quarters—and in the first hand, George spoke up.

"Wait a minute, I have the joker. I need another card."

"Oh no you don't," I said. "That is the six of clubs. We lost the real six and you'll notice the markings in the corner."

George laid down his hand and said, "If the Commander in Chief of this armada, which is supposed to lick Hitler, cannot afford one complete set of cards, then I have grave doubts that more necessary items of equipment are adequate and ready."

"George," I said, "let me tell you this. We are not going to be playing games with the Nazis."

IN THE preparation of an immense military enterprise, the staggering multiplicity of decisions and details can tend to dwarf other things in life. But like all men in the services, I had personal concerns and worries, prides and fears, and a good thing, too—they helped save us from degenerating into one-track machines. With the awesome potential of D Day approaching, I found myself thinking like a father.

John's graduation from West Point was on June 6, which turned out to be the date of the invasion. General Marshall, characteristically thoughtful, directed that he be sent to London for a short leave before reporting to Fort Benning. As was to be expected, John wanted me to assign him to the troops right then, but he accepted my decision that he go along with the others of his class through the routine. We spent as much time together as possible during his limited leave.

After the landings on the morning of June 6, the battling stayed tough and constant for weeks until Bradley started a heavy attack, captured Saint-Lô, and about August broke through the left flank of the defending forces. For a while the front was quite fluid, and though the duties at headquarters were heavy, I managed to visit our forward units with some regularity.

General Wade H. Haislip, one of my oldest friends, was commanding the XV Corps and I determined to visit him. As I reached his headquarters about noon, he came out in a jeep to meet me. His greeting was almost surly:

"General, I think you should turn around and go right back. We've got Nazi artillery firing on our flank and we think there's

a counterattack building up that just might overrun the area."

"Well, Ham," I said, "I'd like to see their attack. I'm confident you can handle it. Besides, I don't see you running."

"Of course we'll handle it!" he said. "But I don't want the Supreme Commander killed in my corps area."

I was sure there would be no quick overrunning of the positions, so I said I was going to stay for lunch, at least. That lunch was a comedy, served in double-quick time. Haislip ordered soup for me without waiting for the others to sit down, and he had the main course on the table before I was through with the first one. Just to plague him a little more I said, "Now look, Ham, I had no breakfast and I'm going to enjoy this. I won't be hurried."

He consented to my having thirty minutes for lunch. At thirty minutes plus one he took me for a ride, saying there was something interesting he wanted me to see. After a couple of minutes, I remarked, "Okay, Ham, I'm just smart enough to know this is the same road I came in on. What was it you wanted to show me?"

"I want to show you the shortest way out of this corps area!"

After the liberation of Paris, when officers came back from the front to my headquarters, I tried to treat them with more hospitality than that! Bradley came to my winter headquarters at Versailles and I wanted to give him a fine luncheon. The day before I had received a bushel of oysters, still in their shells. I told my mess sergeant, "This noon we'll have an oyster feast for General Bradley. Let's serve raw oysters, then oyster soup, and as an entree, fried oysters."

I was smiling in anticipation as we sat down at the table. When those beauties on the half shell came out, Brad looked up and said inoffensively, "I can't touch oysters."

I sent for the mess sergeant, whispered frantically, and dawdled over my raw oysters while he drummed up some kind of edible meat—Spam, if I'm not mistaken.

OF COURSE the war was not all oysters or bridge games. From the start of OVERLORD, we knew that we would win—knew it not factually, but with faith. Yet even when the Nazis' situation

was hopeless, they could explode with bursts of deadliness. The Battle of the Bulge coincided with my advancement to five-star rank. It was a dangerous episode; but at Bastogne, the most publicized (but possibly not the most critical) of our stands against the German attack, thousands of encircled paratroopers held out and wrecked the Nazis' time schedule. On a smaller scale, Bastogne was repeated in scores of little places, hamlets and bridge crossings where handfuls of men might for hours hold up a Nazi column.

On December 22, 1944, our southern counterattack was launched and in my order of the day I wrote:

The enemy is making his supreme effort. He is fighting savagely to take back all that you have won and is using every treacherous trick to deceive and kill. . . . In the face of your proven bravery and fortitude he will completely fail.

The enemy did fail. But to put it in those terms is to understate grievously what happened. These were the times when the grand strategy of high command became a soldiers' war of sheer courage. Our men responded gallantly. Along with the constant threat of sudden death, they overcame all that the elements could inflict on them—snow and ice, clammy fog and freezing rain—and all the pain of arduous marches and sleepless watches. They had left their wives and children, or set aside hopes of wives and children, and now they fought down their inclinations to rest tired bodies, to play it safe, to search out a hiding place.

In the light of their record, I am skeptical of those who criticize our young people today, and bemoan their alleged desertion of traditional American standards. Many things now going on disturb me because they seem senseless or graceless; but I believe that we can always rely on the willingness of Americans, including young ones, to endure greatly in their country's cause.

On May 7, 1945, a group of tired men met in my headquarters in Rheims. The moment was at hand. There had been long and tedious negotiations with German leaders, who were backing and

filling, uncertain who was speaking for the deceased Hitler. When the signing of the surrender finally took place, my group went to bed to sleep the clock around. I waited up only long enough to call Omar Bradley. "Brad, I've got good news. Get the word around." And then I issued the climactic order of the war in Europe. "Make sure that all firing stops at midnight of the eighth."

*London, Frankfurt, Berlin*

FROM Pearl Harbor Sunday until the German capitulation forty-one months later, I had been under all the pressures for which I had been preparing myself through my entire career. However, the size of the job, and the number and uniqueness of the pressures, were unexpected, to say the least. Like so many other men and women who had been at war physically or emotionally, exhaustion rather than exultation was my first reaction to victory in Europe. As I write, two decades later, the days following the armistice are fuzzier in memory than any other period of World War II. I had been liberated too. In a deep sag of reaction, I luxuriated in freedom from decisions about the life and death of human beings.

In June, Winston Churchill invited me to come from my Frankfurt headquarters to Britain. I was to be made a Freeman of the City of London at a ceremony in the ancient Guildhall. The occasion would require a speech, the first formal address of any length that I had had to give. I labored at it mightily, going over and over it until I could say it without notes, but to fortify myself I wrote out on a small card the first words of each paragraph.

On the day of the ceremony my aides had to go to the Guildhall early. I was feeling confined, a little nervous, and thought I would spend half an hour alone in the park. I slipped out of the back door of the Dorchester Hotel, but as I crossed the street, a cabdriver put his head out the window and called, "Ike! Good old Ike!" He stopped and produced a piece of paper, which I signed. Then his passengers got out and asked me for autographs

too. In moments, it seemed, a crowd of hundreds had gathered.

It was flattering, but it was becoming difficult to extricate myself. As the crowd continued to grow, someone looked over from the hotel, saw the trouble I was in, and called for a squad of police. They formed a flying wedge, got in to me, and then got me out in time to meet my OVERLORD Deputy, Air Chief Marshal Arthur Tedder, with whom I proceeded to the boundary of the City, the old city of London. From there, in a horse-drawn carriage, we were escorted through crowds to the historic Guildhall.

The outside of the hall was not imposing but the interior certainly was. Before me was the Lord Mayor of London in ceremonial robes. The hall was jammed.

The sword I was to receive was not yet ready, so I was given, as a symbol, the Wellington Sword—a curved, oriental scimitar, encrusted with jewels. (The actual sword, bearing the Order of Merit insignia and other significant engravings, is now one of the prized possessions of my son, John, and will go down, I hope, from father to son as long as there are Eisenhower boys in my family.) Then the huge audience sat in absolute silence while I spoke. What I tried to express, in part, was that the honor was mingled with sadness—the sadness known to any man who receives acclaim earned in the blood of his followers and the sacrifices of his friends. The London papers later greeted the talk warmly—and even, in an excess of friendly misjudgment, boxed it on the front page with the Gettysburg Address.

After lunch at the Mansion House, across the street, Winston Churchill and I stood on a balcony, greeting a dense gathering in the square below.

"I've got just as much right to be down there yelling as you do," I said to the crowd. "You see, I'm a citizen of London now, too."

MY HEADQUARTERS was now absorbed in another unprecedented military move: transporting a million victorious combat veterans to the Pacific Front. Other veterans, many of them our recovered prisoners of war, were to be returned home. Inescapably, many of the men sent to the Pacific felt that an injustice was being done

them. Dissatisfaction, contagious in an army fresh from battle with no enemy in its immediate front, could have produced wild disorder among less disciplined men. But somehow the turnaround was accomplished.

One way to speed up our veterans' return home from Europe occurred to me. Tens of thousands of men, ready for embarkation, were crowded into a camp near Le Havre. Every day they saw Liberty and Victory ships going home empty, while they had to wait for the relatively few troop-transport ships. Not realizing the impossibility of using cargo vessels because of the lack of sanitary facilities, etc., they were giving their officers a bad time.

One answer to the problem—if the soldiers were willing to put up with considerable inconvenience—was to double the passenger load of the transports by feeding and sleeping the men in shifts. To the thousands who had gathered to greet our party I said over the PA system, "Do you want to go back home comfortably—or would you rather double up and get home quickly?" Thunderous applause told me that a sticky situation had been resolved.

The time came for me to take a trip to the United States, to Washington, New York, West Point, Kansas City and Abilene. It turned out to be a far cry from the simple, secret visit I had earlier and naïvely planned. In the cities, I was amazed at the numbers of people who met us on the streets, and at the wild enthusiasm of their greeting. The trip to Washington was so overwhelming I thought everything to follow would be anticlimax. When we went to New York, however, the entire city seemed to be on hand. Hour upon hour, we traveled avenues jammed with people, while others hung out the windows of towering buildings.

Going back to Abilene was a visit to memories. My father was no longer there. When he died in 1942 the house had lost one of its commanding presences. However, the sight of my mother was one of the rewards of peace.

BACK in Frankfurt, the atmosphere was friendliness itself. There was a genuine welcome on the faces of the Germans. Whatever the postwar debates, it was easy to see that the population was



relieved that the war was over and Hitler no more. American troops proved to be friendly ambassadors on the whole, free of ruthless vindictiveness or looting.

Between Frankfurt and the town where I lived was a little village with a school. As my car drove by, children of eight or ten would rush to the picket fence calling, "Heil, Ice-en-hower! Heil, Ice-en-hower!" It was ironic to realize that if they had said it a short time earlier, their families would have been executed.

In Frankfurt I had my final brush with George Patton's impulsiveness. At a press conference, something was said about the Allies' policy of denying former Nazis positions in the German government. Patton remarked that this was being overdone—and then had to add a suggestion that the Nazis were just another political party, like the Republicans and Democrats. Such a remark might have had its roots in traditional American readiness to let bygones be bygones, but George Patton was aware that a principal purpose of our occupation mission was to cleanse the Continent of Nazi control. His words could have been misinterpreted by those who wanted a soft policy toward Nazi leaders.

I ordered him to my headquarters and said, "The war's over and I don't want to hurt you—but I can't have you making such ridiculous statements. I'm giving you a new job. You'll be head of a study group to analyze the American war record in Europe and make conclusions on the major lessons of our campaigns."

Though disappointed to leave his Third Army, Patton gave his new job the same enthusiasm he gave to battle. From then on he had no occasion to meet the press and I had none to criticize him.

DEFEATED Germany was divided into four sectors, one each to be administered by the Soviets, the French, the British and ourselves. Periodically, the representatives of these countries—Marshal Zhukov, General Koenig, Field Marshal Montgomery and I—met in Berlin. In general, these meetings were friendly but at times there was acrimonious debate, when one of the Western Allies complained of Russian interference with their forces in Berlin, or they accused us of infractions of agreements.

Marshal Zhukov was rather standoffish with the other two representatives, but between him and me there was a degree of mutual understanding that permitted a frank exchange of views. We talked at length about the war. He was particularly interested in the logistic arrangements that had enabled the Allies to make rapid advances, such as our pipelines for gas and oil laid under the English Channel and across France, and our "Red Ball" truck lines, with one-way truck roads and three shifts of drivers to keep every vehicle on the road constantly. Later, in Moscow, he and Marshal Stalin made this sort of thing the subject of long conversations. Although the Russian scientific community had a pool of theoretical genius and engineering talent, the ingenuities of mass production were still a mystery to them.

So were the workings of our democratic institutions. In Berlin one day, Marshal Zhukov came to me scowling and spoke in abrupt terms about what he called a personal insult. One of our magazines had published a story about him alleging, among other things, that he was shorter than his wife.

I tried to convince him that while such errors were regrettable, they were not official and not meant to belittle him. He said they were deliberate insults and wanted to know how I was going to punish the journalists responsible.

My efforts to explain the workings of a free press were futile; had the matter not been serious, my failure would have been funny. I explained that one reason why my nation and I had fought in the war was to defend the right of free speech and of a free press.

The Marshal would not believe that such a thing could exist. He insisted, "If you were described like this by any publication in my country, I would see that it was eliminated immediately."

Zhukov had scant patience with political men. Once when I wanted to talk to him about a military matter and had not brought along my political adviser, I told him that he could have his present if he liked. "No," he replied, "if you're not going to have yours, I'm going to throw mine out." He turned to Andrei Vishinsky and said, "Get out, I don't want you here."

BACK IN THE SPRING of 1944, when we were preparing for the cross-Channel attack, most people believed that Germany would put up such a fight that it could not be overcome in less than two years. My estimate was too optimistic by four months. But it was satisfying to all field commanders that the surrender took place almost exactly eleven months from our landing in Normandy.

Then came the inevitable questions and arguments: Why was this done? Why didn't you do better? Our actions were not above criticism, and critique and analysis of history is surely of value. But at times, as the postmortems have gone on, it has looked as if we blundered throughout the campaign and were defeated.

The question with the longest life is why the Western Allies did not capture Berlin. It is heard repeatedly, sometimes in a context that implies a conspiracy to promote Soviet control of Eastern Europe.

No one has yet shown definitively why we should have captured Berlin. Indeed, considering the proximity of the Russian forces to that city as compared to our own when the final attacks were launched, no one has produced evidence of the feasibility of our capturing it before they did. If we had, we would not have gained much and we could have lost a great deal. The national zones of occupation in Germany had already been decided upon by our political chiefs. The orders I received for conducting the war were: You will land in Europe and, proceeding to Germany, will destroy Hitler and all his forces.

That we did. To then jeopardize thousands of Allied soldiers' lives in an onslaught on the Berlin bunkers would have been a sacrifice of men to gain a symbol.

On February 11, 1965, I wrote to Senator A. Willis Robertson of Virginia, who had asked for the bare facts. I told the Senator:

(a) The mission of the Allied forces was not the capture of localities but the destruction of Hitler's armed might.

(b) No matter what German areas might be captured, each nation was required, under the political agreement, to retire within the lines prescribed—long before the end of the war—by

Generalissimo Stalin, President Roosevelt and Prime Minister Churchill.

(c) When our final operational plans had been drawn up, approved, and issued to Bradley, Montgomery and Devers—in April 1945—the Western Allies had encircled the Ruhr, but their main body was two hundred miles from Berlin. The Russian front was thirty miles from Berlin and its spearheads were already west of the Oder River. Under these circumstances, our plans made no mention of Berlin. . . .

(d) My own headquarters had reported to our government in January that our advance in Germany would penetrate far deeper than the line which the political leaders had agreed upon as the eastern boundary for occupation by the Western Allies. Berlin was deep in the zone that was to be Russian. Our government decided that no change should be made in these boundaries.

(e) . . . During the Allied advance between the Rhine and the Elbe . . . Winston Churchill did suddenly suggest the possible political value of capturing Berlin. But the ground forces were accomplishing the prescribed objectives and to have changed these materially would have been difficult, and, in my opinion, absolutely unnecessary and unwise. It is not correct to say, as some suggested, that President Roosevelt *refused me permission* to take Berlin, but he was party to the earlier political decision that placed Berlin well beyond the Western Allies' sectors of occupation.

After I was transferred to the United States, General Lucius Clay became Commander in Chief of the American Zone. His masterful performance in that position has become history.

### *Lost in the Pentagon*

THROUGH the many months of World War II in Europe, we had all heard about the wonders of the Pentagon. Every visitor arrived with at least one story about what had happened to someone lost in its labyrinth of corridors. One was told of an Army Air Corps captain who got so lost that when he finally arrived at the office

he was looking for he had been promoted to full colonel. Suddenly, I was working there, and occasionally getting lost myself.

No personal enthusiasm marked my promotion to Chief of Staff, the highest military post a soldier in the United States Army can reach. The job ahead was not pleasant. The demobilization of a wartime army is a dreary business. The high morale that characterizes the healthy unit in campaigns deteriorates as the time nears for its dispersal. The citizen-soldier and his family want him at home, today, at once!

Long before the end of the war, General Marshall, recalling the frenzy of World War I's much simpler demobilization, had directed a commission of civilians and military men to prepare a charter for the orderly and speedy return home of our troops. Out of their studies came the point system—a table of credits earned by each soldier for his time of service, time in combat, wounds and disabilities, his age and family obligations. Every officer and man could easily figure out his own priority for discharge. I think there was general agreement that it was an equitable system. I know that when I first saw it I felt that here again was a striking example of General Marshall's foresight and wisdom.

On my return from Europe, my professional concerns were maintaining the peace we had won, ensuring the continued security of the United States, and demobilization. Washington seemed preoccupied with the present, with the widespread demand to "get the boys home." The past did get some attention: there was an obsession in both houses of the Congress to find a scapegoat for Pearl Harbor. But of the future, piled high with threats to our victory and our continuing security, there seemed to be little thought.

This was frightening to one who had seen Europe devastated from the Polish border to the Atlantic. Although the will to live was strong in those who had survived, the means to live had been so thoroughly disrupted that chaos was inevitable unless the Allied Armies in their occupied areas could provide a temporary framework of support. Without that framework, anarchy would engulf many of the liberated lands, and the next masters of

Europe could be either Communists or successors to the Nazis. To every rational American the Army's mission must have seemed obvious, but words of caution went unheard in early 1946.

Each month from V-J Day on, we had exceeded the established quota of soldiers to be returned to their families. By the end of 1945, the figure had reached five million, almost double the scheduled number. In part, this tremendous move was the result of a purely emotional surge in every echelon of command from the War Department down—a determination to get every possible man home by Christmas. Even as I sympathized with the deep-seated emotions, I knew that further yielding to them could produce the collapse of the demobilization system.

Only six weeks or so after taking over as Chief of Staff, I had to go before Congress, the principal target of those demanding instant demobilization, and explain all the facts. The Senators and Representatives were concerned by what seemed to be a wave of national hysteria. They were a difficult audience to face. All I could do was make a personal pledge that in each case where unusual hardship or any injustice was claimed, my staff would investigate and report to me. Returning to the Pentagon, I directed that the first thing every morning I wanted a digest of the pleas that had arrived the day before.

I read these every morning, on some days several hundred of them. The correspondence section of my office was enlarged, and working hours ran from seven in the morning until far into the night, weekends not excepted.

Inevitably, complaints continued that we were not moving fast enough. Not everyone was prepared to accept the fact that a globally dispersed army, stationed on all the continents and on islands from the Arctic to the edges of Antarctica, whose mobilization and transport had required years to effect, could not be returned home in a few months. To assure myself that there would be no slowing down, I insisted on daily reports of the movement of troops through the discharge pipelines.

In compiling these reports, we used the most modern statistical machines. However, the machines, perhaps feeling the pressures

themselves, at times seemed confused by the data fed into them. Certainly the figures they turned out were confusing. Eventually, I ordered a hand count of every officer and man still in uniform. This old-fashioned census, laborious as it was, gave us our first accurate figures. We learned that our machines had been off by several hundred thousand men. Since then I've always mistrusted, a little, even the most handsome, most intricate and guaranteed computer.

By this time, a representative from every military service was before the Congress begging for a peacetime establishment that could meet our nation's new worldwide obligations. But the Congress was tired of wartime spending. Military appropriations were cut drastically. Even when I asked for money with which to salvage the Army's usable vehicles, scattered across the world and rusting away, my recommendations were ignored.

It was idle for the Joint Chiefs of Staff to warn that the defeat of Japan and Germany did not mean that peace and light were going to be order of the day for the coming years. This drastic retrenchment forced us to take nearly all elements of military strength from Korea. In my opinion, that unnecessary conflict was thereby encouraged.

AMONG all the skills with which a soldier these days must concern himself, not the least important is public relations—a phrase almost unknown to the Army until World War II. That ignorance—or negligence—may be one reason why at the end of every war the Army was a budgetary stepchild. Chiefs of Staff might argue that appropriations were inadequate, but they did it to their civilian superiors or to congressional committees. The general public, either as an interested audience or as a source of support, was largely ignored because of a long tradition, accepted by the Army, that soldiers should be seen but not heard.

George Marshall, who had a panoramic view of everything affecting the nation's defenses, saw that if there was to be an authentic partnership between civilians and troops in uniform, the public must be well informed about the Army's purposes and

its need. He created a Bureau of Public Relations in the War Department, and assigned to it General Alexander Surles, one of the wisest soldiers I have known. Cynics describe P.R. as a maternity gown designed to hide the true figure of fact, and, if abused, it can be. Properly practiced, however, it is necessary in a republic where the citizens must know the truth.

My own relations with the press during the war had always been frank and cordial. Correspondents were scrupulously careful—when they understood the need for secrecy—not to compromise security; and the traffic in information was two-way. Because they reflected the reaction of civilians at home, and even of troops in combat, I learned much from them. After I had become Chief of Staff, when Aleck Surles retired, I appointed as P.R. officer Major General Floyd Parks, a man so sure that truth could be effective in the forming of sound public opinion that he was forthright to the point of bluntness. He was far more concerned with substance and accuracy than with phraseology or timing. It was only later, in the White House, that I understood how critical an ingredient timing is in the public's attention to news.

IN THE Pentagon, I encountered with full force a phenomenon of American public life—the total lack of privacy permitted a senior officer of government. I had to live with the knowledge that every phone call I made was monitored and possibly recorded in a stenographer's notebook; that every letter addressed to me, unless from my wife or a close relative or friend, was read by at least one member of the staff; that every word I wrote, even the scraps I rejected and tossed into the wastebasket, would be scrupulously filed away for eventual microfilming and scrutiny by students of history. I've heard this sort of life described as downright intolerable, but I was less troubled by it than some people, possibly because the Army way of life is an open society—the actions of officers often provide the principal topics of conversation among all ranks. Also, because I have always sought to develop a family feeling with my staff, I had the consolation that most of those intently watching me were friends.



Now and then, they went to remarkable lengths in their meticulous guard over me. Almost twenty years after the fact, for instance, I learned that the ribbons I had worn on my jacket one day had been a cause for alarm. When visiting a foreign embassy, I would wear the appropriate ribbon for the medal from that country's government. On a certain visit I had the wrong country—that is, the wrong ribbon—and the Pentagon was shaken to its foundations. In the matter of decorations, none are so sensitive as diplomats! Next morning, this memo was published:

... Hereafter when General Eisenhower's calendar indicates he is to call at a foreign embassy or to participate in any event in connection with a foreign dignitary, action will be instituted immediately to insure that he wears the proper ribbons. In order that all concerned display necessary initiative without prodding or last-minute apoplexy, the following measures will be taken:

1. When the engagement is made, Major Cannon will notify Major Schulz *immediately*.

2. Major Schulz will notify Sgt. Murray and is responsible that the ribbons worn by the General are proper and in order. *This will be done at once.*

3. Sgt. Murray will prepare the ribbons for General Eisenhower's blouse or jacket. *This will be done as rapidly as possible.*

4. Major Cannon will verify the propriety of ribbons.

5. Major Cannon will notify the undersigned when mission is accomplished.

6. Major Schulz will insure that Sgt. Moaney has ribbons and is informed as to when and where the General will require them.

7. If the General is required to be away on a trip and ribbons are necessary, either Sgt. Dry or Sgt. Murray will have required ribbons with them.

I should add that all five men involved survived the memorandum. The two majors became brigadier generals, and Robert L. Schulz has been my aide for twenty-one years. Sergeant William

Murray is retired from the Army and is now in hotel work in Washington. Sergeant John Moaney and I have been inseparable for almost a quarter of a century; in my daily life, he is just about the irreplaceable man. Sergeant Leonard Dry was Mamie's chauffeur at Columbia and in the White House; he has had the same job with Mrs. Kennedy and Mrs. Johnson.

MANY months before I left the Army I was approached by representatives of various publishing houses, each with a different reason for wanting to publish my memoirs of the war. To all these proposals I turned a deaf ear. For one thing, I was really tired; I wanted to loaf awhile and then try to find out what to do with the rest of my life. I had a notion I might settle down in the vicinity of some small college and make a connection that would bring me in touch with young people. I had a suspicion they could understand more about the world and its complexities than they were being taught.

Many of the publishing proposals were purely financial. I was not one to scorn money, but money alone had no temptation. Then Douglas M. Black of Doubleday and William Robinson of the New York *Herald Tribune* came to me with a different kind of argument. Historians, they said, use contemporary accounts as source material. Books about wars by authors who were not participants are frequently used as main sources. They reminded me of books on the African and European campaigns, written hurriedly so as not to "miss the market," some of them riddled with inaccuracies. Mr. Black and Mr. Robinson pointed out that since these errors were written during my lifetime and were not denied or corrected by me, the historians of the future must give them a high degree of credence. "You owe it to yourself and to history to tell the personal story of your European campaigns on a factual basis." This reasoning impressed me. I warned that there would be no sensationalism, and that my writings were unlikely to attract many readers. Mr. Black said: "All we want you to do is to tell your story, your way."

So on February 8, 1948, I started on a writing program, at a

speed that a soldier would call a blitz. There was a great deal of material immediately at hand. I had years earlier formed a habit of dictating long memoranda for my files, with my opinions and conclusions on the principal developments of the past two to three months. In addition, I had throughout the war carried on an intermittent official correspondence with General Marshall, Prime Minister Churchill, Generals Bradley, Patton and Montgomery, and the Operations Division of the American War Department. These gave me a fairly complete record of events as I had seen them at the time.

I handed each chapter to my researcher as I wrote it. He then took it to the records to find documentation for every statement. After several drafts, the text went to experts who would come back with suggestions. Frequently I adopted some of these, but not if they seemed to change my meaning in the slightest degree. I tried to write as plainly and straightforwardly as possible. Just before starting the work I had reread Grant's memoirs, which I had always admired for their simplicity and lack of pretension. I refused superlatives or purple adjectives, and I would not indulge in the disparagement of others that had badly marred many military accounts.

In one way, this striving for plain objectivity caused me uneasiness. I constantly argued with my editors that the lack of drama and of criticism and argument would make the book banal and of little interest to the public. They assured me that this war book would be better received if it were factual and personal without any trace of theatrics. So the manuscript was finished, and in the fall of 1948 an ad hoc partnership of the *Herald Tribune* and Doubleday, in the persons of Mr. Robinson and Mr. Black, made an offer which I considered more than generous. I expressed again and again the fear that they would have an expensive white elephant on their hands. They smiled and said that, to the contrary, they were not sure they were treating me fairly. Both publishers and I later became warm friends.

The book sold unbelievably well. In the fall of 1966—eighteen years later—I asked Doubleday for a roundup of the story and

was assured that the book had been a profitable venture on their part. At least 1,170,000 copies of *Crusade in Europe* were sold in the United States, and there were contracts for twenty-two foreign-language editions.

THINKING back on whatever happened to my privacy, I have to think of what happened to my politics. There were journalists who believed that I was a candidate for public office. All journalists know that political life can be rugged, yet they assume automatically that every man who has the chance wants to get into it. Among those pushing me toward office were people whose opinions I valued, mostly educators and writers who shared my convictions about the need for balance among the several branches of government. However, I was insistent in my belief that a man's military success was not, alone, important to the nation's peacetime progress.

I had other personal ambitions. Mamie and I had always agreed that as soon as I got out of the service we would go to that little college town, and probably buy a modest ranch. After I entered the office of Chief of Staff I received numerous offers to join either commercial or educational institutions. The commercial offers I could decline out of hand: I did not believe it fitting for a man who had been honored by his government with military responsibilities to profit financially for no reason other than that his name was widely known. Offers from the educational field were something else. I looked at those long and hard.

On the political side, pressures increased. Finally, I put my views before the public in a letter I sent to a newspaper publisher who wanted to enter my name in the New Hampshire presidential primary of March 1948. I worked over the draft of the letter carefully because I did not want to make it appear that I was arrogant or aloof—but I did want to make it definite that I was not going to get involved in politics.

I ended, in a model case of cracked crystal ball, "In any event, my decision to remove myself completely from the political scene is definite and positive."



## VI CHANGING HATS

### *Professor She*

WHEN A COMMITTEE from the Board of Trustees of Columbia University asked me to become President of that great institution, I at first declined because I felt the post should go to a man who was not only a good executive but was known as a scholar. The committee was not discouraged. To all my hesitations, they countered that I had a broad experience in dealing with human beings and human problems; that I knew at first hand many areas of the earth and their peoples; that my interest in the training of young Americans offset my lack of formal preparation. They added that their invitation had the complete approval of Columbia's former President, Nicholas Murray Butler, that many-sided scholar who personified Columbia in the public eye.

My preference, as I've said, inclined me toward a small school in a rural setting. In such a place, where friendly ties with students and faculty could easily be developed, I hoped to share

with them the lessons in hindsight from a reasonably full life. Such a role I would have loved and it would have been easy.

Columbia, on the other hand, was a formidable challenge. Located in the world's greatest city, it was an international mecca for students and scholars. Its twenty-six or so acres were a microcosm of the intellectual world. Famed philosophers, scientists, historians were familiar figures on the sidewalks. The students, who in the undergraduate and graduate schools numbered around thirty thousand, were variety itself, in race, dress, speech. In all this diversity, a single concern—the search for knowledge and its dissemination—gave Columbia homogeneity.

My difficulty in deciding was based on a natural fear that I could hardly hope to discharge responsibilities so different from all my own experience and in a place already so richly endowed with leadership in its deans and senior faculty. On the other hand, I saw in Columbia opportunities as rewarding as the environment might be strange and difficult. In the end, I decided that if the faculty could stand me, I could stand the job.

FOR MORE than half a century, Nicholas Murray Butler had been Columbia's chief, as scholar and builder, as spokesman and showpiece. My selection as President must have caused grumblings about the danger that a professional soldier might corrupt academic standards. But I soon learned that deep within the University structure my arrival had caused little stir at all.

On Friday evening, for example, Low Library, where the administrative offices were concentrated, closed its doors until Monday morning. For me, Saturday was just another day in the week, when I expected to put in at least a few hours at the desk. For the first few Saturdays I walked to the Library with a staff member who had the proper keys. One Saturday I attempted to penetrate the vastness of Low without my guide, only to be confronted by a campus policeman who refused me entrance.

"I'd like to get into the President's office," I said.

"There won't be anybody there," he said.

When I added that my name was Eisenhower, his firm stand

changed not an iota. Nor did it when I assured him that I was President of the University. At that point another policeman, who had apparently seen my picture in the paper, came along and vouched for me. The ivory towers of learning on Morningside Heights were guarded by more than venerable philosophers.

Late one evening I visited old East Hall, which housed the studios of the Fine Arts Department. I had heard about the work of one of the painters there and wanted to see it. During the visit, a watchman asked me to identify myself. When I said that I was President of the University, a look of vigorous disbelief crossed his face and he was prepared to order my instant departure when the artist came out of his studio and saved me.

Later I learned that the watchman had reported discovering in East Hall an elderly man who claimed to be President of Columbia but did not look it. The guard was accustomed to Nicholas Murray Butler, who looked the role to perfection.

WHEN I first saw our future residence at 60 Morningside Drive, I was a little disturbed by its mansionlike appearance. Mamie set to work to brighten it up, but I still needed a room in which I could flee grandeur. There was no attic, and the basement was beyond redemption. But on the roof, where a water tank had been, was a sort of penthouse. From it, on clear nights, you could see the lights of Long Island. Here we put furniture, dear from association but ineligible for the gracious rooms below. Here I could escape from the demands of official life and be myself.

Soon after we moved in, an artist, Thomas E. Stephens, began a portrait of Mamie. I was an interested spectator. After a sitting one day, he asked Mamie to go with him through the house to find a proper place to hang the portrait. When the two of them left, it occurred to me to use the paints remaining on his palette to try poking away on my own. The only subject I could think of was right before me—Mamie's unfinished portrait. Using a clean dustcloth tacked to a board as a canvas, I started out and kept going until the two explorers came back about forty-five minutes later. I displayed my version of Mamie, weird and wonderful to

behold, and we all laughed heartily. But Tom Stephens urged me to keep trying.

A few days later a package arrived. Opening it, I found a present from Mr. Stephens: everything I could possibly need—except ability—to start painting. I looked upon it as a wonderful gesture and a sheer waste of money. But I left the open package in my room, and one day I took the plunge. In spite of my complete lack of talent, the attempt to paint was absorbing. I had a new hobby, and the penthouse retreat was an ideal studio.

The one thing I could do well from the beginning was to cover hands, clothes and floor with more paint than ever reached the canvas. After eighteen years, I am still messy. I still refuse to refer to my productions as paintings. They are daubs, born of my love of color and my pleasure in experimenting. I attempt only simple compositions, and I destroy two out of each three I start.

In the White House, in bad weather, painting was one way to survive away from the desk. In a little room on the second floor, paints and easel were ready to use. Often, going to lunch, I'd stop off for ten minutes to paint. In Gettysburg I've tried landscapes and still lifes, but with magnificent audacity, I have tried more portraits than anything else—I've also burned more.

THE FIRST member of the University family to greet Mamie and me when we arrived at 60 Morningside in May 1948 was David Syrett, the nine-year-old son of a faculty member. He was outfitted in cowboy togs. Meeting us at our new front door, he made a good picture for the waiting photographers. Better still, for us, the informality—and the age of the University's unofficial greeter—set the right tone. I think David was more interested in getting an autograph than anything else. Our picture made page one in many newspapers the following day, I am told.

Fifteen years later, when I was in New York for the 1963 Alexander Hamilton dinner, David appeared again. We were photographed, and several newspapers ran a then-and-now layout, one of them pointing out that young Syrett had developed much more than I had since our first meeting. He was preparing



to do his graduate work in history at the University of London.

The years between the two meetings had been for both of us, I think, exciting, unexpected and rewarding. Young David Syrett, on that May day almost twenty years ago, crystallized for me the idea that humanity would be present among the humanities and sciences. In the middle of that great center of learning, one small boy had set himself a mission and wanted proof of its accomplishment. In his eager curiosity, forthright warmth and initiative, he got it. My autograph was an urban counterpart to the jack-rabbit a country boy might have exhibited after a chase.

I arrived at Columbia determined to enjoy a firsthand association with the students. However, I had not fully realized the scope of my other duties and responsibilities. Supervising the management of a vast endowment that included one of the largest real estate empires in New York; satisfying the demand for speeches, alumni appearances, ceremonial functions; correcting an appalling deficit that threatened academic standards, salary scales and Columbia's traditional objective of excellence—all these soon sealed me off from communication with the young men and women. Students, the chief reason for a university's being, and for me the paramount appeal of campus life, were numerical figures on forms and unknown faces on campus. This became a source of vast annoyance to me.

In the Army, whenever I became fed up with meetings, protocol and paper work, I could rehabilitate myself by a visit with the troops. As a university president, perhaps less sure of myself, I did not at first permit myself as much freedom. I know now that I should have tossed the rules of academic propriety into the trash can, abandoning my office and its minutiae more frequently—if only by looking in over Lou Little's shoulder while he worked out with the squad, or advising married students on the GI bill how to decorate their apartments. As it was, I never succeeded in liberating myself from the traditional decorum and pomp of the university president's role.

But if learning to take a place in academic life was not simple, learning to like the people of Columbia was. Most of the men and

women of the faculty and administration were brilliant in their talk, profound in their thoughts, and enthusiastic about the University. I conceived an instant liking for them and they immensely broadened my horizons. Among them I felt myself a student who learned more than I could hope to give in return.

THE COLUMBIA faculty, I believed, could extend the moral and intellectual strength of the University and serve the whole nation by taking the lead in studying the vast problems thrust upon us after World War II. Among these problems were: First, the mental and physical health of our young people, among far too many of whom weaknesses of mind and body had been revealed during the war years. Second, the aggressive demands of pressure groups and special interests in every area of our social and economic life; these contradicted the American tradition that no part of our country should prosper except as the whole prospered. And third, a sort of torpor about individual responsibility, a disbelief that an individual could accomplish much for the good of all. This seemed to suggest a disregard for the meaning of American citizenship, its obligations as well as its rights.

I saw on our faculty an immense pool of talent, scholarly and humane, which could propose solutions to such problems. With Dean Philip Young of the Graduate School of Business, I began to elaborate the idea of a truly national assembly where we could add to the University's resources other experts from every walk of life. Gathered together, free from telephone calls and urgent summonses to make instant decisions, they might examine the larger problems, and arrive at working conclusions.

Working toward this idea became an absorbing pursuit for me. Through most of 1949 I talked about it, wrote about it, thought about it incessantly. Till late in the year, I got no farther than a name—the American Assembly. Then Averell Harriman became interested. He offered the family home, Arden House, high on a ridge near the Hudson, as a site for the Assembly. Now known as the Harriman campus of Columbia University, this old mansion has witnessed scores of meetings concerned with almost every

aspect of human society. Throughout the years, its influence has been far-reaching beyond my dreams. Much of the time I think its beginnings were my principal success as University President.

A project called the Conservation of Human Resources had its beginnings in my wartime realization that we had seriously neglected the preparation of our young people to be vigorous, productive members of society. This neglect was tragically tabulated in the armed forces rejection records. I suspected that a study of these records could produce guideposts for our future conduct as a nation. Dr. Eli Ginzberg, whose profound scholar-



ship did not blunt an almost boyish enthusiasm about any proposal for the betterment of human living, took over this project with a passion. The support I was able to produce in furthering his research and advancing his proposals is still one of my proudest memories.

The Institute for the Study of War and Peace, the new Engineering Center headed by Dean John Donning, the Citizenship Education Project, were innovations we worked out during my Columbia years. And there was one innovation that reflected a country boy's distaste for concrete and macadam.

Our "campus" had a factory-yard appearance that distressed me. Leaving my office in the Low Library on a hot day I looked down the long flight of stone steps, across 116th Street, crowded with parked cars and creeping traffic, over the dry gravel and the

clay of tennis courts to Butler Library, grassless, treeless. This was the physical center and heart of the University. It should be a green oasis. In my mind's eye, I could see the hot and noisy street converted to lawn, with automobiles forever barred.

It was, I thought, an improvement that could be accomplished in a few months and at little expense. But settling one problem seemed to spawn two or three more. The project dragged on, and I was living in the White House, surrounded by lawn, before the dream became reality and 116th Street a pleasant mall.

From the alumni point of view, my largest contribution to Columbia's stature may well have been my first. Before my arrival, I had known only one of my future colleagues. Lou Little, who was football coach at Georgetown University back in the twenties when I was coaching an Army team, had for many years been a fixture at Columbia. On the eve of my departure from Washington for Columbia, he was offered the head coaching job at Yale. The alumni panicked. A group of them, headed by Bill Donovan of the OSS in World War II, and Frank Hogan, District Attorney of New York, escorted Lou to see me at Fort Myer. With no professional or financial arguments to offer, I was reduced to a personal appeal. "Lou, you cannot do this to me," I said. "You're one of the reasons I'm going to Columbia."

He seemed flustered, but recovered quickly, and we talked football, reminisced, discussed the state of the game. For once, all my years of coaching seemed to make sense. But I was uneasy about what Lou's decision would be until I heard that as soon as he'd arrived back in his hotel he had called his wife, Loretta, in New York and said: "Stop packing. We're not going!"

I am told that my triumph was cited by the Columbia alumni as proof that I had leadership potential. And there was, I think, a substantial academic by-product. Other universities, with more ready cash than Columbia had, were raiding the talent pool of Columbia's staff. Had Lou been lured to a rival campus, the University might have been hurt by a chain reaction of raids from other schools against which it had, until we could raise the salary levels, little protection except appeals to loyalty.

MY LIFE AT THE UNIVERSITY, exhausting enough for a neophyte in education, was complicated by a presidential summons in the fall of 1948. I was asked to go to Washington regularly to serve as senior adviser to James Forrestal, Secretary of the new Defense Department, created in 1947 when the Congress passed an act unifying the armed services. At the same time—due to the illness of Admiral William Leahy—I would serve as informal chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. I was assured that it was to be part-time duty, but it turned out to be no less than a major role in the reconstruction of the military establishment. Sometimes I was an umpire between disputing services—the new Defense Department was plagued with rivalries—and sometimes a hatchetman on what Fox Conner used to call Fool Schemes. Commuting between Washington and New York ate up a good many hours, and making half a dozen speeches a week for the University was something of a burden, but the two jobs were not incompatible, and much of the time they were inspiring and rewarding. As the several kinds of work extended through many months, however, my health was affected.

My real acquaintanceship with James Forrestal began when, as Chief of Staff of the Army, I met him during the war. Now I became one of his close associates. He was the first man in government who warned me that in his opinion our government was being quite unwary in its dealings with the Soviets. Since I had, because of personal experience, become increasingly sure that the Soviets would not look upon the United States as anything other than a potential enemy, I had a high regard for Mr. Forrestal's opinion. He served in his very important post with as great a degree of selflessness as almost anyone I could name.

In appearance, Mr. Forrestal was rather pugnacious. However, in carrying on the heavy responsibilities of the Secretary of Defense, he seemed cautious and hesitant. He'd get into difficulties when tough decisions were placed before him, and when his advisers engaged in controversies among themselves. At such times he would come to what seemed a definite conclusion, only to reopen the question later. When this happened more than

once, I realized that he was a worrier; he allowed problems to stay with him after they had presumably been solved.

The most serious of these occasions that I recall was one on which the Navy and the Air Force took opposite sides on the question of developing the B-36 bomber. Hour after hour we listened to opposing arguments, and finally to the advice of our scientists to the effect that if the United States was to have, during the next few years, any intercontinental bombing plane we must build a number of B-36s. This seemingly persuaded Jim Forrestal and, with my strong concurrence, he gave the go-ahead signal.

But within minutes he was in my office. "You know, Ike," he said, "I think we'll have to go into this B-36 matter a little more deeply." I was shocked, and realized that either the man was losing his memory or was becoming too confused to concentrate.

As time went by, though I watched for confirmation of my fears, I concluded that it had been some temporary situation brought on by intense study and sleeplessness. However, two of the Secretary's civilian associates came to me one day to say that he was showing signs of a nervous breakdown and ought to take a short leave. I promised to do my best to get him to do so.

It wasn't easy. Finally, I met him head on about it. "Mr. Secretary," I said, "you showed a great deal of confidence in me by asking me to act as your personal adviser. Obviously, unless you can go away for a week or ten days without feeling the place will fall around your ears, you haven't that sort of confidence in me. I might as well give up and go back to New York."

To this he reacted earnestly. "Oh, by no means," he said. And he faithfully promised to go away that evening for a few days.

The following morning he was in his office as if nothing had happened. I chided him, and he seemed to have completely forgotten the conversation. I was now convinced that something was really wrong. I talked again with his civilian assistants.

Ever since the election of 1948, Mr. Forrestal had been quite unhappy. Because of his conviction that Defense, like the State Department, should be administered on behalf of the United States and without regard to party, he had, although a lifelong

Democrat, declined to participate in the campaign. According to him, this attitude had incurred the enmity of the White House staff, which was now "out to get him." Whether such concerns intensified his nervousness I cannot say, but I believe its basic cause was overwork and lack of cooperation, not only in the government at large but within the Defense Department itself.

In the early months of 1949 it became obvious that his condition was deteriorating rapidly. When he said he would have to resign if the difficulties he was having in the Department kept up, I did not discourage him. As much as I liked him and admired his good qualities, I came to believe that this would be the best thing he could do. About the first of March he submitted a letter of resignation to the President. His place was to be taken by Louis Johnson, a past commander of the American Legion and an Assistant Secretary of War under Franklin Roosevelt.

Now it appeared that I, too, had pushed myself too hard. On the evening of March 21, I was struck with an attack of a most distressing kind (one that foreshadowed the ileitis of 1956). While I lay stretched out in my Washington hotel room, Mr. Forrestal called. "Ike," he said, "I simply can't turn this job over to Louis Johnson. He knows nothing about the problems and things will go to pot. I'll have to withdraw my resignation."

I replied with all my strength, urging him not to do anything so foolish. I said it would have no effect in any event because the ceremony of transfer had been set up for that day and would be impossible to stop. He seemed to accept this counsel.

Afterward, I became so ill that I lost touch with events. For days my head was not off the pillow, and I was forbidden solid food and cigarettes, but I was too ill to miss either. Then I woke one morning and asked for a cigarette.

My physician, General Howard Snyder, was no fanatic about smoking. Still, he did insist that I should reduce my consumption to less than my customary four packs. Although I was still sick, my head was clear enough to ponder this advice. Cigarettes, I knew, were doing me no good, but I rebelled at the prospect of a life in which they would have to be rationed by the clock. In-

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evitably, when I had exhausted my day's quota, I would either have to suffer the agonies of deprivation or start again on the four-pack-a-day road. "I'll just have to quit," I said. And I did.

When I was well enough, I went to Florida for recuperation. There I heard that Jim Forrestal had been sent to Bethesda Naval Hospital in distressing mental shape. Not long afterward we learned of his death, apparently caused by a leap from the top floor of the hospital. It was a sad end to the man with the fighter's face, the lonely responsibility of establishing a vitally important new Cabinet post, and a limitless devotion to his country.

WHILE I was Chief of Staff, Mamie and I had frequently discussed the sort of home that would fit us best, if we ever got one. Now, after moving into Columbia, we started thinking again about a place of our own. I wanted an escape from concrete into the countryside. Mamie, who had spent a lifetime adjusting herself to other people's housing designs, or the lack of them, wanted a place that conformed to her notions of what a home should be. In the fall of 1950, we finally did something about it.

My wartime friend, George Allen, and his wife, Mary, had recently bought a farmhouse in the Gettysburg area, a mile or so south of the battlefield. They urged us to consider the same sort of move. Gettysburg is within easy traveling distance of Washington and New York; the idea was attractive. So one weekend we went with the Allens on a farm-hunting expedition. The most appealing property we saw was a farm of not quite 190 acres, the house dwarfed by a huge barn, at the end of a lane half a mile long. The buildings had seen better days. So had the soil. It would take work and money, but this was a chance, I thought, to prove that careful husbandry could restore land to its original fertility. The view of the mountains to the west was good. And Mamie had found the place she wanted.

To complete the story, I must move ahead in time. The ink was not long dry on the deed to our property when a message from President Truman ended our days at Columbia and sent us back to Europe. Our plans for a home were deferred once more.





Later, entering the White House in 1953, Mamie said, "I still have no home of my own." She made up her mind to start restoring the old farmhouse, come what may. I had an engineering survey made and found, much to her dismay, that most of the house was actually a log cabin with a brick veneer covering its walls. The logs were moldy and worm-eaten, about two hundred years old. There was nothing to do but tear the place down.

So anxious was Mamie to retain even a fragment of the original structure, that when she found one portion of the wall and a Dutch oven in which no logs had been used, she built a complete house around them. We built step by step, according to Mamie's ideas. When she occasionally forgot a detail or two, work would have to be redone. For example, when the walls were going up, we discovered that no plans had been made for central air conditioning, and the walls had to be torn down again so that air ducts could be installed. But the work was done well and the house did conform largely to her ideas.

Before work began, the builder, a friend of ours named Charlie Tompkins, asked me whether I wanted to use union labor or local labor, which was not unionized but which he considered competent. I told him that as President of the United States I would be dealing with unions and I thought it only proper to use union labor. When the house was finished, he showed me two sets of books—one of costs actually incurred and the other of what the cost would have been if we had used local labor. The additional expense was \$65,000.

This involved much more than a mere difference in wages, of course. It was caused by the time spent in transporting laborers, in some instances from as far away as Washington, requiring us to pay for an eight-hour day in return for only four hours' work. Finally, when the bill was handed to us, it amounted to \$215,000. This did include \$45,000 for improvements other than to the house itself, but it was considerably more than we had thought of spending. We scraped the bottom of the barrel and Mamie drew on some money she had inherited, so that by mid-1955 we had a place we could call home, and it was paid for.

We have now lived there for more than eleven years, counting weekends during the latter part of my Presidency. While it is beautiful to us, we have, like other home builders, found things we would like to change. But we have learned to live with our mistakes. And we have learned, too, that one room can constitute a home. Our favorite at Gettysburg is a glassed-in porch where we spend hours from early breakfast to late evening. Facing east, with the morning sun brightening it, and in shadow through the heat of a summer day, the furnishings casual and designed for comfort, it provides an oasis of relaxation.

We were on our way to Denver for a Christmas visit with Mamie's folks when President Truman's call reached me. He said that he would like me to command the NATO forces then being assembled in Europe. He put it as a request, not an order, but he was the President of the United States and I had been a soldier all my life. I was one still. I told him I would report at any time he said. He said to go ahead with our leave in Denver, and that he would see me in Washington after our return.

I was reluctant to end my career at Columbia, but I felt that my enforced absence, at a time when important new projects were getting under way, would be harmful. I therefore told Fred Coykendall, Chairman of Columbia's Board of Trustees, that I would resign. After discussing it with his associates, he said that all were in favor of giving me an indefinite leave; only in the event that my absence was prolonged beyond two years or so would they consider my resignation. I accepted their decision gladly for it permitted me the hope of eventual return.

### *The SHAPE of things to come*

AT FOUR O'CLOCK in the morning, on Washington's Birthday, 1951, Mamie and I were roused from a sound sleep and debarked from the *Queen Elizabeth* to drink champagne toasts in a warehouse on the Cherbourg docks. Because this was the region where the Allied forces under my command had begun the liberation of

Europe, the ship was met by the mayor of the city, his council and a number of other officials.

The toasts were frequent, grandiose, and delivered in French. My replies were brief, for my French was halting, the sound approximately that of a Kansas threshing machine. For Mamie and me the greeting was especially charming, an auspicious start to our residence in France.

That winter, the world outlook was bleak for those of us who only five years before had fought a war to eradicate tyranny from the earth. It now seemed that, at any moment, the arrogance of Communist power might be converted into offensive action against the West. It had already exploded in the Far East, where the United Nations troops in Korea were suffering tragic reverses.

Few things were predictable about the supreme command of an enterprise that required wholehearted cooperation by twelve nations—nations whose territories were as small as tiny Luxembourg or as globe-spanning as the United States and Great Britain. We were attempting to forge a unified organization out of many peoples and personalities, many languages, diverse cultures, faiths and histories. Apprehensions about a potential aggressive move against the West provided the starting point for an alliance for survival. But we were not at war. The absence of an imminent threat meant the absence of strong motivation and we had no assurance that NATO could win its members' complete allegiance. A personal reconnaissance was my first job.

In eighteen days, and in bitter winter weather, I visited eleven European capitals. I was favorably impressed by the governments with which I conferred. Of course, each wanted more American strength in Europe than we then had, and I agreed to try to attain *temporary* reinforcement, but I pointed out that the United States would be providing a strong Navy and Air Force for the benefit of all and that we would always be one of the principal arsenals of democracy in the event of trouble. I told them that the thickly populated areas of Western Europe should be able to provide the vast bulk of the land forces needed, even if we had to provide a few divisions to give them confidence.

That period has long since elapsed. I believe, however, that we should keep in Europe, for the foreseeable future, a force of reasonable size—about the equivalent of two divisions. Their presence there would be clear evidence that in the event of general war, we would be in it from the beginning.

President Truman had suggested that at the end of the trip I should report my conclusions at an informal session with the Congress, and in a nationwide broadcast to the American people. Aboard the plane, I began to work on the two speeches; few have ever given me so much trouble. On one hand, I had to stress as forcefully as I could the weakness, almost defenselessness, of Western Europe against possible irruption from the East. On the other hand I had to stress just as forcefully the spiritual vigor of the European peoples, who, having labored with the help of the Marshall Plan\* to repair the devastation of war, now found in the North Atlantic Treaty new hope.

The three principal points I wanted to make were: that the preservation of a free America required our participation in the defense of Western Europe; that success *was* attainable, given unity in spirit and action; and that our own major role should be as a storehouse of munitions and equipment, although initially a fairly heavy commitment of American troops would be required—something like six divisions. I told the Congress all this, as I had the President the day before. Then, in executive sessions, first of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, and then of the House Armed Services and Foreign Relations committees, I was questioned almost to the point of cross-examination.

I came to realize that these representatives of the people were sharply divided about the Republic's role in world affairs. A hard core of extreme nationalists seemed to be echoing the isolationist philosophy of more than ten years earlier. Others were skeptical of our Allies' dependability and even their will to defend themselves. Still others felt our contribution should be limited to money and supplies. Fortunately many shared the conviction that

\* Or European Recovery Plan—a postwar program of U.S. aid, initiated by General Marshall.

NATO as a collective defense could be a success. But I felt I had to make it clear in person, to those opposed, that by going to Europe we were only protecting our own frontier. The long-range bomber had moved America's frontier to the heart of Europe, as far as military effectiveness was concerned.

At that moment, the debate in Congress centered on two issues: the constitutional power of the President to deploy troops abroad in time of peace as he saw fit, without the approval of Congress; and the size of the forces that the United States should deploy in Europe. The President, a Democrat, favored a strong commitment of approximately six divisions, and it was natural to suppose that his party would follow his lead. Some Republicans also believed that the free world could exist only through effective cooperation among its principal nations. But an important element in the Republican party was opposed to the President on both points. I felt that before leaving for Europe I should see what I could do to smooth over the differences. I asked Senator Robert Taft for an appointment to discuss the NATO project.

We had a long talk. I think he may have been a bit suspicious of my motives—a good many persons had been urging me publicly to run for the Presidency. My first purpose was to be assured that when I got back to Europe, the United States government would be solid in support of NATO. If such assurance was forthcoming from the chief spokesman of what seemed to be the opposition, I then planned to issue a statement so strong that it would kill off any further speculation about me as a presidential candidate. On the NATO question I used all the persuasion I could, and our conversation was long and friendly; but Senator Taft refused to commit himself. This aroused my fears that isolationism was stronger in the Congress than I had suspected.

His refusal meant two big disappointments to me. I could not now feel the unity of my government behind me, and I had lost the chance to settle the political question once and for all. In the absence of the assurance I had been seeking, it would be silly to throw away whatever political influence I might possess that would help keep us on the right track.

TO PRODUCE ALLIED COOPERATION in World War II was far easier than developing a military defense for NATO and peace. This was an enterprise without precedent. In wartime, neither Britain nor the United States ever held back in the hope that the other would perform the necessary but nasty chores. In time of peace, and in spite of common danger, the same desire to make maximum contributions did not always prevail. Draft laws, for example, required too short a tour of military service to allow the kind of technical training necessary with highly sophisticated modern weaponry. I went the rounds of NATO governments urging a two-year term of service, but it appeared that none would risk incurring political resentment in its own country.

NATO was, nevertheless, a necessary mechanism. The Marshall Plan had not yet reached full fruition—self-confidence was still lacking throughout Western Europe. One of NATO's greatest goals was to restore and sustain that confidence. Existing defense forces could not match, or even scratch, those of the Communist bloc. But the knowledge that a unified, progressive effort to generate strength was under way had an almost electrifying effect on European thinking.

Clearly each NATO country could not be expected to produce a rounded defense. It would be ridiculous, for instance, to ask the smaller nations to create their own nuclear capability. Our effort was to mobilize the troops and weapons most easily and effectively produced in each nation, and so lighten the burden on each.

As we studied how best to do this, the idea of a single operational command for NATO's defense forces was conceived. Under this plan, known as the European Defense Community, each unit of division strength would be homogeneous as to nationality, while the larger units, corps and armies, could contain within themselves units of different countries.

From the first, the small countries agreed with the idea. Originally, Mr. Churchill was opposed. And the plan, largely designed by the French, soon ran into opposition—from the French, worrying lest Germany become so powerful that it might dominate the Allied establishment. Mr. Churchill's reasons were less clear, for

he had been himself a major influence in achieving a somewhat similar organization in World War II.

For many months, my staff worked hard with the military officials of all NATO countries to get the kind of organization and command system that would give no nation a position of overweening influence. At the same time, they worked to produce the maximum defensive force.

By May of 1952, all the governments, including France, had approved the plan. By now Greece and Turkey had joined the organization, and we were sure that within a few years West Germany would become a full-fledged member also, bringing the total number of powers to fifteen. In a year and a half we had surmounted the obstacles of nationalism, provincialism, and outright disbelief that the job could be done. These nations had proved unified in purpose and performance—in the planning councils, on the maneuver fields. NATO had become a vital, intercontinental institution, a historic fact. Whatever the future might hold, and whatever history might decide, I am glad this mighty force has existed.

With the work I had been sent to do largely accomplished, I felt I could be released from active duty. During 1951 tremendous demands had been put on me to get into politics. Men of every kind and from both parties had visited my headquarters, each with his own reasons for asserting that I owed it to the country to become a political candidate. With none of this did I agree. Nor did I believe that my visitors, despite their political acumen and experience, reflected majority opinion in either of the parties or in the country.

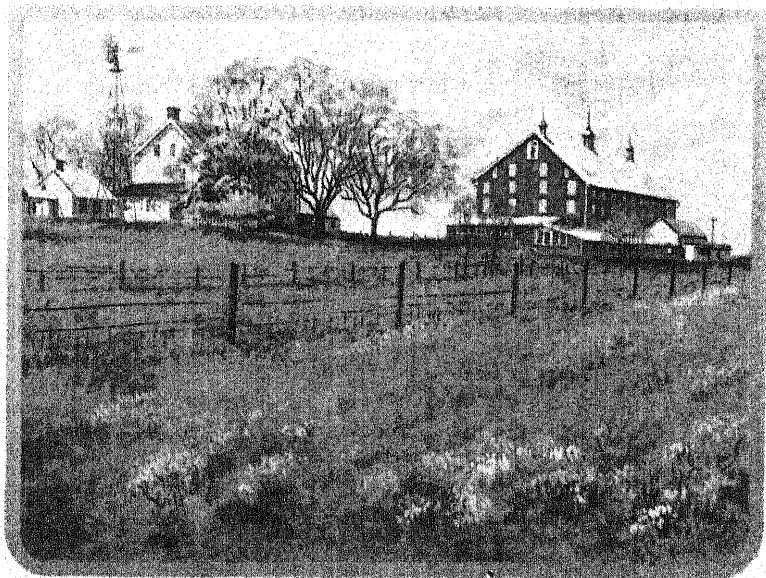
Until March 1952, I made no personal contribution to the issue other than the statement of Republican affiliation I had felt it necessary to make in January. This gave me a little peace of mind, for I was sure that the Taft forces within the Republican Party were strong enough to deny anyone else the nomination. In this belief I was steadfast until the New Hampshire primary, for which my name had been entered.

The day before it was held, I dictated a letter to Arthur

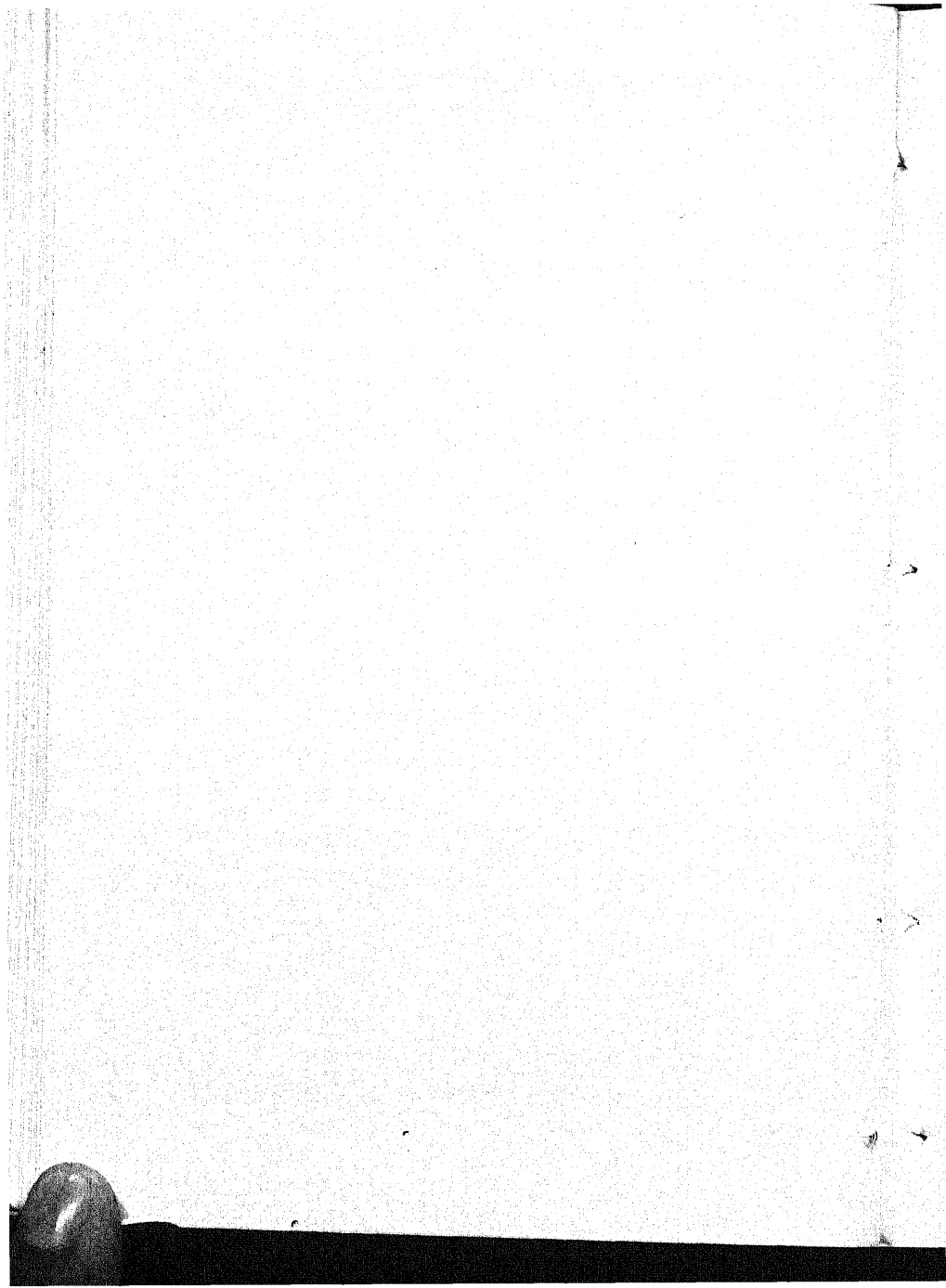
Summerfield, the Republican leader in Michigan, declining an invitation to visit that state before the national convention. He had asked me, along with other "candidates," to be seen and heard by the Republicans there. I explained that I could not accept because I was not a candidate. The following morning, reading the letter over, I added a postscript saying that before nightfall the New Hampshire voters might very well eliminate me from the possibility of candidacy anytime, anywhere.

They did not. For weeks thereafter I had to wrestle with the facts and arguments so often and so long presented. Finally, I came to the conclusion that, with numerous people I deeply respected stressing our country's need for a change in political control and domestic programs, I should return to the United States. I would abide by the decisions of my party and of the electorate if I were nominated.

We looked around us, said good-by to Europe, and turned toward home. Once again, Mamie and I began packing.









# The Least One

*The warm and richly varied story of a close-knit family,  
told by its appealing youngest member*

A CONDENSATION OF THE BOOK BY

**Borden Deal**

ILLUSTRATED BY THOMAS BEECHAM

*Bugscuffle Bottoms* meant different things to different people. To Lee Sword, a Southerner hard hit by the Depression, it was a chance to farm the land he loved. To his wife, Jinmie, it was "dependence on others." "Dirt poor" her family may have been, but they stood with their heads proud on their own land, while Lee and his neighbors were now merely sharecroppers. John, their elder son, worked hard and said little. It was on their least one, Boy, that the place made its deepest impression.

Boy was twelve—too proud to be a child but not yet ready to be a man. His first months at Bugscuffle Bottoms presented problems no more serious than dodging chores and beating up boys who teased him about his name, or lack of one. But as time went by and his need for a place in the world increased, so did the amount of trouble he managed to get into. He would narrowly escape death, and come very close to killing his father, before making peace with his surroundings and himself.

"The Least One" is a wise, affectionate, often humorous portrait of family life. It is also a true and colorful account of an era that is uniquely American.

## CHAPTER I

the January of the year when we come to that place. Daddy pulled on the reins, stopping the wagon in the gravel road, and said, "There it is."

I raised up from where I was riding on the back of the load. John turned around from the kitchen chair he was sitting on right up at the very tip-top of our piled household plunder. Mama sat on the seat board beside Daddy where she had rode silent all the way from Uncle Gabe's place. She didn't turn her head.

"I never thought I'd live in a place called Bugscuffle Bottoms," she said.

"We've been all over that," Daddy said.

Mama didn't say anything. I couldn't see her but I knew she was sitting tall-backed, with her mouth drawn tight and hurtful.

I kept on looking. I hadn't ever seen it myself till yet. The gravel road made a curve and went on up some low hills beyond. On the inside of the curve sat a big white-painted house, crowded with windows. The wagon took the outside of the curve which branched off onto a dirt track. There was a house on this side of the road, too, big and rambling but unpainted and weathered. A woman stood short-legged and thick-bodied on the porch, watching us drive past. There was a cold lump in my belly because I

knew Bugscuffle Bottoms was full of strangers I'd have to meet and live with. New school, too.

Off to our right were two more houses, called shotgun houses because you can fire a shotgun in at the front door and hit every room. Farther on were an old bungalow and two larger houses. I wondered which house would be ours.

Daddy had just come in that day and said, "I've found us a place." That was enough for him. For a year, now, he hadn't had a place to work, nor nothing to work it with; we had lived in the little house Uncle Gabe could spare us and scrounged the best we could because Uncle Gabe couldn't spare land, too. So it didn't have to be a good place. It just had to be a place.

The surprise was the artesian well. Daddy hadn't mentioned that. It sprouted iron-piped out of the ground in front of the old bungalow, flowing as thick as a man's thigh into a long mule trough and then away toward the creek down yonder.

Paths radiated from the artesian well to each of the seven houses and I knew that the well was the center of the settlement. Here was the reason for Bugscuffle Bottoms; not the land, not the houses, not the people. The well itself.

"Did you see all the good water, Mama?" I said.

"I saw it," she said. Her voice didn't yield an inch.

The wagon stopped in front of the bungalow closest to the well, and I hoped this one would be ours because I knew who'd be toting the water. I waited as long as I could and then I said, "Is this our house?"

"This is the house Senator Clayton let me have," Daddy said. He didn't look at Mama.

Our house had never been painted, and the wooden walls were old and dark. A broad, low chimney split the roof line. A picket fence, the only one in the settlement, rambled four-square, and beyond was a small tumbledown barn. The house looked friendly.

Mama climbed stiffly down over the wheel and I watched her face, anxious to see arrival break through that stiffness. She studied this house without moving from beside the loaded wagon. Then she walked to the gate and opened it.

I held my breath, thinking, If she turns around now we'll all have to go back to Uncle Gabe's. There was a brick walk from the fence to the front steps. She went along it, climbed the two steps without hesitation and stood on the porch.

Mama was nearly as tall as Daddy. She had a rawboned, double-jointed body; until the day she died she could bend over, her knees straight, and touch both palms flat to the floor. Yet there was a certain grace in her movements, not of femininity but of purpose, and when she walked she stepped out like a man. Her nose was big but shapely. Her long hair was dark red; she wore it plaited into two efficient braids coiled around her head.

She swept her eyes in a slow half circle. "Not a tree in the yard," she said. "And that ain't much of a barn back yonder."

Daddy climbed down off the wagon and went to join her. "It's the best I could do," he said. "It's January already and I had to have me a crop. I couldn't make another year without a crop of some kind."

She looked at him. I wonder, now, what did she see in her anger and frustration? Daddy was something under six feet, but broad. His hair dark, his eyes brown, his face brown even under his field tan, so that brownness looked natural to him. There was a quickness in her that was never in him; and yet you had the feeling that if you turned around looking for Lee Sword he'd be standing right there. Like John he didn't talk a whole lot and most of the time you couldn't even tell what he was thinking.

The story was, they'd courted for a year and been about to get married when Lee, without saying yea nor nay, had gone away to Texas. He'd stayed gone a good year and then early one Sunday morning he'd showed up, driving a buggy with a white mule, and he'd met Jimmie coming home from church in another buggy.

He had leaned out of his buggy and said, "Miss Jimmie, I'm home for good. Will you marry me?"

They say she looked at him for a long, long minute. Some of the girls in the buggy with her wanted to laugh, but nobody did.

After that long minute she'd said, "I'll marry you today, but I won't marry you tomorrow."

"You just wait right there, Miss Jimmie," Lee had said. "Don't budge an inch." And he had whipped up the white mule into a dead run toward the church.

He came back with the preacher and the marriage ceremony was carried out. It was on the side of a hill, right there on a dirt road, on a Sunday morning in May.

She stood on the porch and looked at him. "I never thought to live on no plantation," she said. "My folks never lived in no huddle with nobody."

"It's not a plantation, Jimmie," Daddy said. "Not really. We all own our own work stock and tools. It's just a settlement. It's just Bugscuffle Bottoms."

"I like a fence around *my* fields," she said. "Next thing you know, we'll be eating corn bread for breakfast."

"Jimmie, it's hard times. It was the best I could do."

"I can go to Bellefonte and get work in the chenille factory," Mama said. "I don't have to live in no huddle if I don't want to."

"Do you call town something besides a huddle?" Daddy said. "You ain't never worked in no chenille factory in your life. You'd hate that kind of public work."

She looked at the house again. "Not a stick of my furniture goes in there until it's been scrubbed from top to bottom," she said. "God knows who's been living here before now."

John jumped off the wagon. "Come on," he said. "Let's get started unloading." Daddy could be silent, but not all the time. Me and Mama, we talked a blue streak. John could go from daylight to dark without opening his mouth. He was tall at fourteen years old, with broad shoulders and big muscles. He was strong, a hard steady worker, and sometimes he'd rare back and slap a two-years-younger brother so hard it'd rattle my teeth.

He looked a lot like Mama, only not rawboned, and a lot like Daddy, only not compact. I can remember them better than I can me. I was small for twelve. Mama's expression for me was, "You're like a wiggleworm in hot ashes." I had red hair the color of Mama's, but I had freckles, too. I was ugly, like a monkey, with ears like jug handles and a nose too big for my face. But I was me.

Things bothered me didn't ever seem to bother John, like Mama fighting so hard to keep from moving to Bugscuffle Bottoms.

Mama lifted her voice. "You heard what I said. That house has got to be scrubbed down to the clean wood."

"You think we can manage all that before it comes dark?" Daddy said mildly.

"There's no law says we've got to sleep in the house."

"It's January, Jimmie," Daddy said. "It's apt to get a mite airish on the front porch sometime before daybreak."

"Fresh air never killed nobody. You two boys get my washpot off the wagon and put a fire under it."

"Ain't we even going to unload?" John said.

"Do what your mama says," Daddy said. "It's her house, and she's got to live in it."

"There's two washpots at the artesian well," I said.

"I don't aim to be beholden for the use of a washpot," Mama said. "I want me some hot water in fifteen minutes. In my own washpot, thank you ma'am." She stalked into the house.

Us three men looked at one another and then we got to work. That darn-fool washpot was at the very bottom of the load and by the time we got to it we had the wagon half unloaded anyway, the scant furniture we owned scattered all over the yard.

"Where are we going to get wood for the fire?" I asked John.

"Use what's left on the woodpile," Daddy said. "We might need it for the fireplace. But I'd rather keep your mama mollified than warm my bones. I'll tell you something to remember, boys. When a woman sets out to clean house, you stand in her way at the risk of your life. Not to mention the peace of your soul."

He was grinning to himself. It made me feel good to see it because I knew then that all the fussing and the fighting was over with. You see, I'd sold out the minute I'd seen the artesian well. Any place named Bugscuffle Bottoms had to be a fearsome place, harboring strange and unruly people. The well had changed my feeling about the name. I already felt at home.

John was building the fire. "Get me some water," he said.

I took the two-gallon water bucket from the wagon and went



on to the artesian well. The bucket filled in no time under the powerful flow, and I toted it back and tilted it over the pot. John had a good fire going; when the water hit the bottom of the pot it scalded up in tiny fryings of sound.

"That's a good way to crack my washpot right through the middle," Mama said ominously from the back door. "Break a family pot, it's eleven years bad luck."

I hadn't ever heard that one, but I wouldn't have doubted her right then if she'd said the Pope was President of the United States; when I knew it was Roosevelt because that's how we'd got our mules.

As I was fetching the fourth bucket of water, I looked up to see a shiny, black, A-model Ford coming down the dirt track from the gravel road. It was a high-bodied two-seater with a rumble seat behind. A man got down from behind the wheel.

He was as old as God and twice as handsome. Here in January he was wearing a white-and-blue seersucker suit like he didn't pay no more attention to the weather than if he was responsible for it. He had a heavy face, with big eyebrows and a big mouth and crow's-feet in the corners of his eyes. He wore a white hat with a wide brim and even had a handkerchief sticking out of his lapel pocket. Not neat, just stuffed in there. He didn't pay me no mind, just went on to Daddy. "I see you got here, Mr. Sword."

Daddy turned. "Yes sir, Senator Clayton."

I should have known. If I'd set out to build me a Senator Clayton from the ground up that's just what he'd have looked like. I feel uneasy when people don't suit their names; no other man I ever saw fitted to the sound of his name like Senator Clayton.

They shook hands and Senator Clayton said how glad he was to have us on his place, because he knew we'd make the best hands ever to come to Bugscuffle Bottoms.

Daddy stood there as pleased as a possum in a persimmon tree. "I want to thank you all over again," he said in an earnest, heartfelt voice. "I don't know what I'd have done, to tell the God's truth. There I'd signed up for the mules and not an inch of ground to my name to work them on."

I had walked on closer. "This-here is my youngest," Daddy said. Senator Clayton turned and I stood looking at him in his glory. I decided then and there that once grown up I'd wear, winter and summer, a blue-striped seersucker suit and a wide white hat. I'd also carry me a handkerchief careless in the lapel pocket.

"Now, that looks like a smart boy," Senator Clayton said.

"He's a reader, all right," Daddy said complacently. "Can't get his nose out of a book at noon or night."

"You ever read *Huckleberry Finn*?" Senator Clayton asked.

"I got whupped in school, laughing out loud reading it," I said.

Senator Clayton laughed. "No teacher worth his salt would ever do that," he said. "I taught school in my younger days. I'd never whip anybody for laughing at old Huckleberry."

I might as well tell about Senator Clayton here and now. He owned Bugscuffle Bottoms, of course, and lived across the road in the big white house. He had two daughters, both married, and no son and he was called Senator because he'd served one term in the state legislature. He was as fine a man as I've ever known.

He was reaching deep into his front pocket. "I found me a knife this morning," he said. "Picked it up, thinking before the day was done I'd more than likely run across a boy in the need of one. I don't reckon you happen to own a knife, do you?"

"No sir, I never have," I said. "I'm always needing a knife, too."

He laughed and put it into my hand. The knife was small, but it had a little silver shield embedded in one of the pearl handles. I didn't realize it then, but it wasn't no found knife; it was brand-new out of the showcase.

"What do you say?" Daddy said.

I didn't mind saying it, but Daddy prompting me was embarrassing. I mumbled "Thank you," looking away.

Mama came out on the front porch. "I need my bucket of soap and I need some . . ." Then, seeing Senator Clayton, she stopped.

"Senator, this is my wife," Daddy said.

The Senator already had his hat in his hand. He paced up the porch steps. "Mrs. Sword, I hope and trust you will like your new place here," he said.

Mama shook hands, reluctant and limp-fingered. "We appreciate what you have done for us," she said stiffly.

"It was my pleasure, ma'am," Senator Clayton said, as courtly as if he aimed to dance with her. "Do you like your house?"

"I can't tell much about it until I get it scrubbed down," Mama said, turning back into the door. Over her shoulder she said, "Get me that bucket of soap, Lee."

Senator Clayton said, "You've got a lot to do, so I'll be on my way. Where's your other boy?" he said to Daddy.

"Call John," Daddy said to me, and I went around the corner of the house and called him.

The Senator shook John's hand but he didn't give him a knife. On his way to the car, he stopped by me. "You use that knife well, now," he said. "You hear?"

"Yes sir," I said.

Senator Clayton went on to his A-model. We all three—me, John, Daddy—stood looking after him. Mama came out of the house again. "Where's my bucket of soap if you-all aim to have a house to sleep in tonight?" she said.

We jumped to it. Daddy got the soap bucket. After dumping my load into the steaming pot, I took her the hot water she wanted.

It was my first time inside the house. It was much bigger than the house we'd been living in. There were two big rooms, a living room and a bedroom, with a fireplace in each using the same chimney in the wall between; the kitchen was a square little lean-to, its walls papered with grease-stained newspapers. In the living room the walls were papered green. It was a dark, huddled house, with small windows. I liked it.

"Hey, Mama, you've got yourself a nice house now, ain't you?" I said as I handed her a bucket of hot water.

"Old wood won't come clean," she said. "No telling how long this house has stood. I just hope that moldy roof don't leak."

I watched as she spilled out water, took a handful of soft yellow soap from the bucket, and stirred it around. I fled outside, then, because I wouldn't have got in her way no more than I would have disputed the path with a wildcat.

It was hump and go for the balance of the day. I toted water. John kept the fire blazing. Daddy kept unloading the wagon and stacking the furniture ready to move in if ever he got the word. As the sun inched down the sky the air got colder. Pretty soon, the wagon unloaded, wood piled handy and the pot full, us three men stood close around the fire to warm our bones.

It was near to sundown when Mama came to the door, holding her hand in the small of her back, to catch a breath.

"Where you aim for us to sleep tonight, Pet?" Daddy said.

She considered for a minute while we held our breaths. "I've got the living room about as clean as it's going to come, I reckon," she said grudgingly. "I guess we can throw the mattresses on the floor and sleep there."

Daddy heaved a sigh of relief. "I'll do better," he said. "I'll set up two beds in the living room and sleep offen the floor like decent folks." He turned to me. "All right, don't stand there with your foot in your hand. Get them mules took out and watered and into the barn. John, tote me an armload of wood into the house."

We started, each in our direction. But we all stopped because that woman who had stood on the front porch of the house near the gravel road was coming around the corner of the picket fence.

"I reckon you must be the Swords," she said. She sounded the w, like folks do who don't know any better. "I'm Mrs. Raincrow. Pleased to meet you." Her mouth was flat and broad, with a snuff stick in one corner. Her eyes were black, her hair black laced with gray.

"We sure are," Daddy said. "Pleased to meet you, Mrs. Raincrow." Mama nodded, without saying anything.

"I didn't figure you folks would have time to get your kitchen stove put up yet," Mrs. Raincrow said. "So I come to ask you-all to take supper with us, such as it is."

"I wouldn't want to put you out none," Mama said before Daddy could say a word. "I thought ahead and brought us a dishpan of supper on the wagon."

"Menfolks like *hot* meals," Mrs. Raincrow said. "Don't ever feed a man a cold supper if you can help it, is what I say."

"I'm fixed to feed them, thank you kindly."

Mrs. Raincrow wavered. "That sure is a pretty name you've got," I said. "I ain't never heard the name of Raincrow before."

She smiled at me. "It's Indian. My man has got Indian blood to him. Sword's right pretty, too. It ain't very usual, either, is it?"

"You don't sound the *w*," I said. "The *w* is silent. *Sored*."

"Don't go correcting your elders," Daddy said.

"I reckon a fellow got a right to hear his name spoke right," Mrs. Raincrow said. She looked at Mama. Mama wasn't participating. "See you-all," Mrs. Raincrow said, and went away.

"She's going to be your neighbor, Jimmie," Daddy said with a trace of sternness.

"I like to know my neighbors before I take up with them."

Daddy sighed. "Come on, boys. Let's get the night work done."

When John and I went to unharness the mules, we saw a cluster of boys near the well. I felt a thud in my stomach. I bent my head, busy taking out Tony on the left side while John took out Prince on the right. Then I got up on Tony, and with John leading Prince, we went to the watering trough. The boys moved out of the way to let the mules drink. They didn't speak. We didn't either.

Finally one of them said, "What's your names?"

I felt pretty good, setting up there on Tony. "Pudden and Tane," I said.

He put his hand on my leg. "Get down off that mule and say it."

I looked down on him. He was narrow-faced, with mean, close eyes, and just about my size.

"Our name is Sword," John said. "What's yours?"

The boy didn't say anything. He didn't aim to be the first to name himself. Now, I've got a funny thing about names. At times I can look at somebody and know their name before I'm told. I don't have the faintest notion how it works—it just pops into my mind like a Ten Commandment.

I looked down on this boy. "His name's Luther," I said.

It didn't bother John none; he'd seen me do it before. It shook the boy, though; his face twisted up with surprise. "How do you know my name?" he said.

"You look like a Luther to me," I said. "Or is it Luke?"

"Luther," he said reluctantly. "Luther Moats. What's it to you?"

John looked at him. "You want to fight him, he'll slide down off that mule and accommodate you."

I figured it was my place to make the offer, if it was to be made. I sat there, pretty much afraid that John would get taken up on it. The other boys were watching and silent.

"I'll get him on the way to school tomorrow," Luther said. "I'll clean his plow for him."

"Why put it off?" John said. "Why don't you take care of it now while you've got it on your mind?"

Tony was through drinking by then. He raised his head, water dripping from his whiskers. I turned him toward the barn.

"You got a coward for a brother?" Luther said softly to John.

John looked surprised. "Where we come from, wouldn't nobody tackle him, not by the ones, anyway."

I didn't look back but I could hear Prince walking behind me. We reached the barn and I slid down off the mule. "I wish you'd let me pick my own fights," I said.

John looked at me. "Never saw you pick one."

"I don't like to fight," I said. "What did you mean, talking about how hard I am to whup?"

"I figured it wouldn't do any harm to have *him* a little scared, too," John said. "You'll have to fight him, you know."

"I don't see why," I said in a voice as stubborn as Mama's.

John paused in unharnessing Prince. "You aim to live here, don't you? All right then. You fight Luther Moats good, that'll be it. You don't fight him, and you'll get run over by everybody in Bugscuffle Bottoms."

"*You* could fight him."

"I don't aim to take him on. It's your fight."

John went away to the wagon for the sack of corn. We gave the mules each three nubbins. I could feel the chill air oozing through cracks in the barn. At that, it was tighter than the house at Uncle Gabe's. "I'd planned on liking it here," I said.

John didn't say anything. He was through talking.

We went on to the house. There was a fire in the fireplace, two beds were up and Daddy had brought in the four straight chairs. Mama had the dishpan on the floor beside her chair. "Eat up and go to bed," she said. "There's a mess of things to do tomorrow. I aim for you to start school the day after."

In the dishpan was cold stewed chicken and corn bread. I was hungry and it was good. We ate by the light of the fire. Even with the strangeness of the flickering shadows on the walls, the new house was warming and shaping itself around us.

A knock sounded on the door. Daddy got up and opened it. Mrs. Raincrow stood there, a blue-enameled coffeepot in one hand. "At least you need some hot coffee to warm your innards," she said. "I set there at my table thinking about your cold supper on a cold night and I just had to . . ."

"Thank you, Mrs. Raincrow," Mama said. "Lee, find us five cups and the sugar." She looked Mrs. Raincrow straight in the face. "Of course you'll stop and have a cup with us."

We had come to Bugscuffle Bottoms.

## CHAPTER II

THIS is how it come about that we had to move to Bugscuffle Bottoms. For as long as I could remember, Daddy had had a beautiful matched team of gray mules and did contract hauling of lumber. We lived in a house so close to the planing mill that our playgrounds were the stacks of lumber set out to cure and the big sawdust pile, higher than any house.

All of a sudden in our house there was talk of being fired. The talk went along, with Daddy and Mama worrying all the time, and finally Daddy yanked us up and set us down in a house on a piece of land and said he'd always thought a man should farm his own land, he never did like public work anyway. He had made a down payment on a farm. He had his team of mules, Daisybelle the cow, plow tools, and land of his own to stand on.

That was the year of cotton. I have never yet seen cotton.

make like it did in 1932. It rained when it ought to rain and stopped when it ought to stop. It come the days of picking and, Lord, how we did work. It seemed like every time we got to the end of a row the green bolls left behind had opened, so that by the time we had finished a field it had turned white all over again. Daddy walked around like a lord of the earth. He laughed and talked more than I can ever remember at any other time.

He couldn't seem to quit picking cotton long enough to take it to the gin. But finally one cool dawn we tromped a wagonload and me and John stood in the road to watch him grate off toward town, sitting high on the white load.

It was nigh sundown when he come home. We ran to meet him, me and John scampering out in front, Mama coming on more stately behind. He sat on the wagon side and in the bed of the wagon was the ginned bale.

"Lee," Mama said. "Lee."

I wish I could forget the way his face looked as he gazed down at her. Bewilderment, mostly, the hardest pain for a man like him to bear. "Jimmie, it ain't worth the picking," he said. "It's selling for four cents a pound."

"We've got lots more than we counted on," Mama said. "We got plenty of cotton . . ."

He lifted his hand and brought it down against the side of the wagon. "This whole country got cotton running out of its ears," he said. "It cost more to raise than we'll ever get out of it."

We didn't pick another boll of that year's cotton. My daddy'd eat breakfast and set on the front porch, looking over the white fields, and he'd set there till darkness hid the fields from his eyes. I didn't know what was going on. One day we were working like devils in hell. The next day we quit. We just quit.

Some time after that the men came. They drove up to the house in two cars, one of them the sheriff and the other a man named Clark from whom Daddy had bought his land. Clark stayed in his car, face stuck out of the window, watching. Daddy stood by the sheriff's car, his hands hanging at his sides, listening to the paper being read. I stood close, watching his face. Mama stood on the



porch, her hand to her cheek. John had gone away somewhere.

When Daddy had heard the paper he didn't say anything, but started down the dirt track toward Mr. Clark's car.

The sheriff slid out of his seat. "Where are you going?" he said.

Daddy didn't stop. "I'm going to kill Mr. Clark," he said. "Damn a man that won't give a man a chance."

"Mr. Sword!" the sheriff said in a hard voice.

Daddy kept on going, and the sheriff had his gun in his hand. I was scared. I wished John was there.

"Leel!" Mama said.

Daddy stopped. He looked at the sheriff like he'd never laid eyes on him before. He looked at Mama. He looked at me.

"Take it," he said in a low voice. "Take it all."

He walked past the sheriff to the house and sat down on the edge of the porch. He didn't look at the fields anymore.

They took it all. A day or two later Mr. Clark sat again in his car while two men bridled up the mules and led away Daisybelle. They ran down the chickens in the yard and put them in the hen coop where it was loaded on a wagon, and they loaded the plow tools, too. They didn't take the household goods because the law wouldn't let them.

When the men had left, with all Daddy's worldly goods and more of his spiritual goods than he could spare, the homestead was so silent you couldn't hardly hear it. I hadn't realized until then the noise that was always with us—the chickens clucking and scratching, the mules and Daisybelle. The sounds had been the sounds of living. They were gone.

For weeks, Daddy walked the countryside looking for land to sharecrop in the coming year. He'd get up in the gray of daylight and drink a cup of weak coffee and not eat a bite of breakfast before he set out, though he was a man who counted on a hearty meal. He'd be gone till night, and come dragging in to eat his only meal of the day by lamplight.

The countryside was full of men like him, walking the roads offering all they had, the labor of their hands, their minds bewildered because the fields were fertile beyond the memory of

the oldest man, choked with cotton worth four cents a pound . . . if a man could even find a buyer. And the hardest part coming when they came home, to not look into the faces of wife and children because they had returned empty-handed.

Mama was not idle. She worked against the long winter, stripping the garden of every pea and every bean. For the first time in her life she canned persimmons. She heard about a family moved off of their place, leaving a half-used garden behind; she went by moonlight and stripped that garden, too, praying all the time she did it because she felt like she was stealing. She used every fruit jar she could lay hands on and packed them in boxes with rags around them, ready to move.

One day Daddy came home with Uncle Gabe, in Uncle Gabe's wagon. The next morning we loaded the household plunder and set out. We were on the road all day and into the night—Uncle Gabe lived in the next county—until we came to the little house down the hill from Uncle Gabe's. It had one room and a kitchen and the walls had cracks you could put your fingers through.

It was a hard winter. Our breakfasts were hot biscuits and thickening gravy. On Sunday mornings we'd have molasses to put on our hot biscuits because Uncle Gabe gave us a bucket out of his own scant store. For Christmas, I remember, Mama made a molasses cake. There wasn't much to choose from in the way of meat; after snow came, we tracked down rabbits and knocked them over with a stick. There was no money for shotgun shells. There was some side meat and sowbelly because Daddy would work all day helping folks kill hogs, and come home with a mess of meat to show for it.

But Mama never put corn bread on the table for breakfast. That was always her saying: We never been down so far we had to eat corn bread for breakfast. I reckon she'd have laid down and died out of sheer mortification if we had ever come to that.

In spring Mama planted a garden and we had a quarter acre of corn which we worked with a hoe. When blackberry time came we ranged the countryside picking berries and then we'd tote them seven miles to town to sell them from door to door.



Selling them was my job. Daddy would work like the very devil, wading into the thickets, fighting briars and chiggers and risking snakebite to find all the blackberries. Next day he'd take three buckets of berries in each hand and walk to town before sunup so the berries would still be fresh. But he would not knock on a door and ask the lady of the house if she wanted to buy fresh-picked blackberries for a dime a bucket. He *couldn't*, I reckon, but I didn't mind. I'd stand there, smiling, and make my pitch about how those berries had been picked before daylight, when I knew they'd been picked yesterday. It was rare when we had to take berries back home. The dimes bought coffee to go with our biscuits and thickening gravy.

In the late spring, with the garden coming in, the tight we were in began to ease. We caught catfish in the river, and once I came home with a sack full of crawfish and Mama snapped off their tails and fried them. When Aunt Volelia came in Mama threw a dish towel over the plate of crawfish tails so Aunt Volelia wouldn't see what we had to eat. Aunt Volelia didn't say anything, but she probably figured it was one of her own chickens in that dish.

I've got to go back a ways now. In the fall, when we had moved to Uncle Gabe's, a presidential election was going on and everybody wanted Roosevelt to win because they felt like he'd do something. It's hard to remember—even hard to believe—how much trust the people of the countryside put into that man. But then there was that long winter stretch before he took up the office, and it seemed like nothing was happening. Oh, they were carrying on up there in Washington and passing laws, but didn't none of it reach down to us.

Looking back, I know it was the only new start Daddy had in sight. The nearest radio was some miles away, at a country store, and Daddy walked there on Inauguration Day to listen to President Roosevelt. "He talked big words," he told Mama later. "But he sounded like he meant them."

Then Daddy waited some more. How many times had he given up hope before he heard what he was waiting to hear? It was called the Mule Program. When he heard those words, Mule Pro-

gram, he knew that they had come to his particular trouble on the list. He went to town long before daylight and when the offices opened in the courthouse he was standing in a line of men that went all around the block. He didn't care how it worked. All he knew was the government would see to it that you got a mule or a team of mules, he wasn't sure which. He signed where he was told to sign and walked out of that courthouse a new man.

It wasn't until the fall that he got the word to come and pick his team. I don't plan to forget that scene. Just off the Jockey Yard was a big trading barn, and that day it was crammed with mules. They had them running loose in the board-fence lots. Hundreds of men were milling around, hollering and shoving, each with papers entitling him to one mule or two. Daddy had the rights to two mules.

A paunchy man in a big white felt hat was sitting up on the board fence, puffing on a cigar and cussing. "All right now, damn it," he yelled. "One at a time or I don't aim to start."

I don't know how he managed it, but Daddy was the very first one. The man took his papers and scanned them. "All right, mister," he said. "Two mules. Get 'em, and get out of here."

Daddy looked at the hundreds of mules that were braying and kicking up dust. "I ain't studied them good," he said. "I . . ."

The man on the fence leaned over and picked up two halters. "Take these," he said. "You've got two minutes to pick two mules. I've got a lot of business to tend to."

Choosing a team of mules is about the most important decision a farming man can make; and Daddy had been given two minutes. He climbed the fence and dropped down amongst all those mules. I ran to watch because I was afraid for him. I wished we hadn't set out to get anything from the Mule Program.

The mules swirled and turned and milled around Daddy. He grabbed one by the jaw but it broke away. He grabbed another and tried to look at its teeth. The second man was over the fence by then, and he threw a halter over that mule's head. The mule jerked away and stampeded.

All the mules stampeded. They thudded in a circle around the

lot, banging the fences, one or two going down and then fighting their way up. By that time three more men were inside the lot.

"He's going to get killed," I said to John. I guess I didn't say it, I guess I screamed it.

John looked at me. "He's got to get his mules," he said. "I'm going to help him."

John started climbing the fence. While he was still straddle of it, Daddy flung himself into the milling mass of mules. I don't know whether he picked Prince or whether he just caught the first one he could. He got a halter on him and led him out of the maelstrom of mule flesh to the fence.

"Hold this one," he told John. And he plunged back in again.

John hung on to that mule's halter with a turtle's grip. The mule tried to break away, wild-eared as a buck, but John held on.

In a minute, Daddy came out of the melee with another mule haltered safe. "Go down there and get that gate ready," he told me. "I've got to get 'em out before one of them gets crippled."

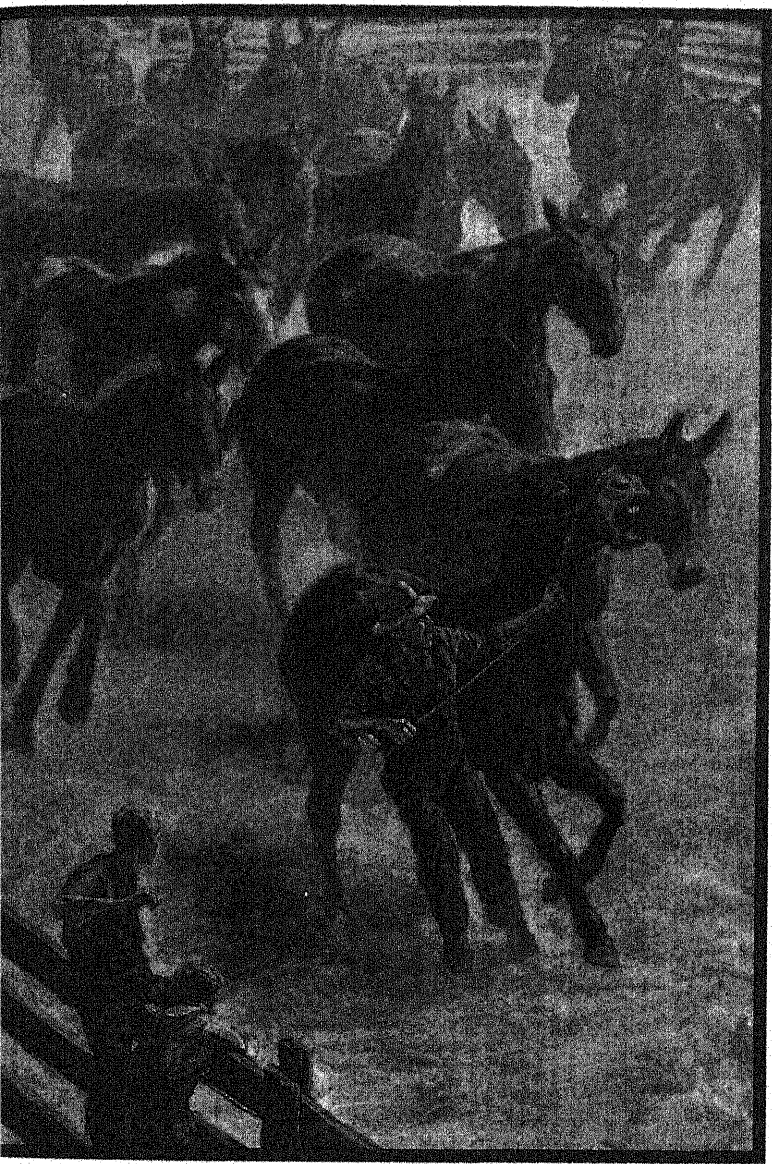
I ran to the big gate, slipped the bar, leaned on the gate. Daddy was working his way along the fence, walking between the two mules, holding both halters tight-gripped under the chin. A wild-eyed man ran up and grabbed Prince's halter. Daddy didn't loose his handhold; he just kicked the man in the belly with his brogan foot. I swung open the heavy gate. Daddy hustled the mules out and I swung the gate shut.

Daddy didn't stop until we had crossed the concrete bridge over the Tuxahatchie River. I was getting winded trying to keep up. "They can't get them back now," I said.

"They better not try it," Daddy said. "Them's *my* mules now." He turned the mules, studying them critically. One was black, high-shouldered and rawboned, at least a hand higher than the mousy-brown one. The brown mule was smaller and plumper and his legs were shorter, too.

"Well, it looks like you fellows have got you a mule apiece," Daddy said, grinning. He looked at me. "I'll give you first choice. That is, if you *want* a mule to call your own."

"Yes sir, I sure do," I said.



Daddy looked at me very serious. "That means you'll have to feed him and curry him and take him to water," he said. "I don't aim to let you have a mule to mistreat, now."

"No sir," I said. "I wouldn't do that."

"I'm the oldest," John said. "I ought to have first choice. I already know the one I want."

I ignored him. I hadn't counted on having to make such a last-ing decision on such short notice—no more than Daddy had. I looked from one mule to the other and back again. I just plain didn't know. The brown mule turned his head and looked at me. He had big, liquid eyes, black as they could be. I looked at the black mule. I didn't like his eyes. I didn't like his rawboned look. I put my hand on the brown mule. "This 'un's mine," I said.

John sighed with relief. "I wanted the black one anyway."

"Now your first duty is to name your mule," Daddy said.

"Prince," John said promptly.

"That's a good name for a fine-looking mule," Daddy said. "What about yours?"

"I've got to study on it a while," I said. "I want to get him named right." I thought about the name all the way home and for three days afterward before I lit on the right one.

I might as well tell about Prince and Tony now because they belong to this telling, too, especially Tony. That's a mule for you—he might be a four-legged creature and the only sex he's allowed is what's in his mind, but he's got more character than a lot of folks you know. Those two mules were as different as me and John. Prince was high-stepping and hard-working. He didn't have a lot of sense but he sure had perseverance. He'd walk a fellow's legs off in a day of plowing. Tony, now, was a con man wrapped in mule hide; mules just didn't come any smarter than him. He was always willing to do his part. The only trouble was, he spent most of his time refiguring what his part was. Hitch him and Prince to a doubletree and not pay much attention, Tony would be in there, muscles rippling and blowing his lungs. But look at the doubletree and you'd see his side laying back at a slant and he wasn't pulling a bit.

He had people figured, too. When Daddy was plowing him he'd step out as brisk as you please. He'd give John about three-quarters of the speed he'd give Daddy. He'd give me about one-eighth, and act like he was doing me a favor to boot. We used to try to fool him. John would be plowing and I'd sneak up behind and put my hand on the plow handle. Tony didn't even have to look around; the minute my hand touched the wood, he'd drop from his speed for John to his speed for me—and, likely as not, take a short nap. Or I could be plowing and Daddy would put his hand on the plow. Tony would wake up and get out of there!

I named him after Tom Mix's horse, of course. I hadn't ever seen a Tom Mix movie but I played Tom Mix right on.

The very next day, Daddy rode off on Tony, looking for a place we could work the coming year, but even with two mules to add to his hands he couldn't find anything. That fall he went to Arkansas to pick cotton and every week a blue money order came from him, which Mama put in a Country Gentleman tobacco sack, pinned inside her dress. By the time he came home she had nearly a dozen of those money orders and we knew we'd make the winter anyway. Daddy come in late one night with a fleece-lined jumper apiece for me and John and himself, and some checked goods for Mama to make a dress.

But he didn't find the land until January and when Mama heard it was Bugscuffle Bottoms she got that tight look around the mouth and said she hadn't never lived in a huddle with other folks and didn't aim to start now; she'd rather eat corn bread for breakfast any day of the week. And that's back where I started.

### CHAPTER III

I DIDN'T have but one day of grace before I came up against what I dreaded most about moving—starting at a new school. Before I get into that, though, I've got to tell about some of the people of Bugscuffle Bottoms.

The first house, beside the gravel road, belonged to the Rain-



crows. Mr. Raincrow was a short, thick man; he had Indian blood and a crippled hip. It was told that years ago he had taken part in a lynching over at Rocky Ford; considerable violence was done to the Negro and his hip was utterly broken. In the twenty years since, *every last one* of the five or six men that carried out the violence had suffered a broken hip, too. Mr. Raincrow got his by falling off a wagon, and one leg was shorter than the other.

The Raincrows had a boy about John's age, name of Odell, who owned a T-model Ford which he tinkered on every Sunday. There was also a plump, obnoxious girl about my age, named Mattie.

The first house on our side of the dirt road was occupied by Big Johnson, the only Negro in Bugscuffle Bottoms. He didn't have any land, but worked by the day for the Senator. Everybody liked Big. He had the right name; he was nearly six foot and a half and must have weighed close to three hundred and fifty pounds, with not an ounce of fat, yet you couldn't ask for a kinder nor a gentler man. Big was married to a young, brown little woman named Maybelle, who was Mrs. Clayton's maid.

The next house along was home base for my new enemy, Luther Moats. He was the oldest of seven children, the others alternating boys and girls down to a baby in dirty diapers. Mr. Moats was a tall thin man with narrow eyes and a dark face, who looked like Luther grown up. Mrs. Moats was a big woman but all her children were thin-bodied as snakes. The boys, except for the least one, were named out of churchly names, Luther, Matthew, Mark, while the girls had flower and stone names, Rose and Pearl and Ruby. The baby was called I.T., because when he was born Mr. Moats had said, "This is IT," and Mrs. Moats had mistook his meaning.

Set off at an angle, and backed up on the creek, was the house belonging to the Lollards. They were a raunchy crew, just the kind of folks Mama had expected to find in Bugscuffle Bottoms. Mrs. Lollard was a fat woman that I never saw in a clean dress; she didn't eat very neat, I guess, and did a lot of it. The father was a miscellaneous sort of person and I can't remember what he looked like.

Fancy Sue Lollard was about seventeen, with a ripe look, and the older boys sniggered about her—with reason. She was mighty handy to go walking in the willow brake of a dull Sunday afternoon. There was a boy named Harry about my age, another one named Willie a year younger, and a beautiful little girl of six with long blond hair and eyes as wise as a mink's already. They were friendly folks, but mean if they got mad at you, which was pretty often.

Between the Lollards' house and ours lived the Robertses. Old Man Roberts and Old Woman Roberts were shriveled and wrinkled, with monkey faces and snuff-stained mouths. They were blessed with three fine grown sons, Jamey, Jerry and Jackson, who had a hand-wound Victrola and six records which they played over and over again, setting on the porch of nights.

Of course, it took days before we got to know everybody. The women came to call on Mama and she received them with tight-lipped politeness, accepting as graciously as possible the house gift of peach preserves or honey or whatever. After Mrs. Lollard had waddled away Mama shook her head and said, "Can't nobody help being poor, but you sure can help being dirty."

It wasn't fair, Mama being so hard on the Bugscuffle folks. They did the best they could. Mr. Raincrow told Daddy to feed our mules out of his crib until our corn came in. He said, "You can't plow them mules without a bait of corn at least once a day. A grass-fed mule will just sweat out on you."

Mr. Moats, Old Man Roberts' boys and Big Johnson brought wood from their piles until we'd had a chance to cut our own, waving away thanks. When Daddy did go for wood, with us boys in school, Big Johnson helped cut and saw.

Daddy had bought mule harness, plows and a wagon out of those money orders, but we were still running pretty scant on all that was needful. Senator Clayton had fixed us a credit at the grocery store against the crop we'd raise, but we couldn't eat that up before we even got the crop into the ground. It would be June before the corn eared out, and fall before there would be any cotton money. But by gosh Daddy had him some land to work,

and he was twice the man he had been. While Mama felt like she was half the woman. I don't know how John felt. Me, I was happy. I took to Bugscuffle Bottoms like a duck to a June bug—except for Luther Moats.

Our third day, Mama roused us off to school. It was cold in the early morning when we lined out for the gravel road. I was shivering from more than the cold. Most of the students from Bugscuffle Bottoms, eleven of them, were already waiting.

A school wagon pulled by a team came along that road every morning. It had a boxy wooden body built on the wagon frame, with built-in benches on each side and a small heater in the middle; the smoke poured out of a stack on the top of the box. Now, according to contract, the wagon quit picking up students exactly a mile away from school. That mile reached just past Bugscuffle Bottoms, so we didn't get to ride. Nevertheless, we waited for the school wagon every morning, then fell in behind, scuffling along with our hands in our pockets and our books tucked under our arms.

The other students would look out the windows and sneer at us poor cold devils trudging along behind. We'd look at them warm in their school wagon, envying them so mightily that once in a while somebody would pick up a gravel and bounce it off the back of the wagon. Immediately every kid in the wagon would yell, "Mr. Goolsby, Mr. Goolsby, they're chunking the wagon again." Mr. Goolsby would jump off the seat, leaving the mules to plod on while he chased us away.

I didn't know all that the first morning, of course. All I knew was that Luther Moats had claimed the privilege of cleaning my plow and I wasn't looking forward to the prospect. He was standing with his tattered books under his arm, looking thin and mean and cold.

"You and Luther aiming to fight, ain't you?" John said.

"He ain't said nothing about it," I said hopefully. "Maybe he's given up the idea."

"How about it, Luther?" John said. "You still got scrapping on your mind?"

John sure did seem anxious to promote this fight. I hadn't ever known him to act so. Luther looked at me, then looked away. Everybody was watching him now.

"You oughtn't to start something you don't aim to finish," John said. "My brother here never dodged a fight in his life. He don't aim to start now."

Harry Lollard slid Luther's books from under his arm. John took mine from me. I waited, empty and scared and knowing Luther was going to beat me up.

A good thing happened to me right then. I realized that Luther was just as afraid of me as I was of him. He didn't think he could whup me, no more than I thought I could whup him. *Luther was just like me.* It made me want to get together with Luther and whip everybody else.

Of course, it couldn't be that way. He mustered courage and hit me in the belly with his fist. I hit him in the nose, and there come a sudden pearl of blood. He hit me again and it hurt and I hit him again and that hurt. We scuffled, and hit again, and then we quit, panting hard, glaring at each other. Somebody hollered, "Yonder comes the school wagon!" and that was all there was to it.

John said in a low voice, "Now you won't have to fight anybody else." And later, nearly to school, Luther and I found ourselves walking together without realizing it.

The schoolhouse was a broad, low building in the middle of an acre of bare ground. The central part of the school was the auditorium, which served as homeroom for all the classes. On one side was a huge coal-burning heater—half the room nearest it burned up, while the half farthest away shivered. A long bench was ranged on each side of the stove and the teacher could give you permission to sit there for a while, if your home seat was too far away from the stove. There was the smells of chalk and dirty clothes and cheap food in brown paper sacks, and that smell, all of us together like that, was the smell of poor folks.

I walked into that school for the first time scrooched up tight in my soul, for I knew what was going to happen. As we were going up the steps in the midst of all those strange children John said,

"You got it yet?" When I shook my head, he said in an urgent voice, "Think of one right now."

I shook my head more stubbornly, meaning, It ain't my place. John knew how I felt about that and so he didn't say any more.

Everybody had a seat but me and John, so we waited by the red-hot stove while the roll was called by the nice-looking principal, Mr. Smith. Then he turned to us. "We have two new pupils starting today. I think they should tell the assembly who they are."

"My name is John Sword," John said. "We just moved to Bugscuffle Bottoms." There was a snicker at the words, Bugscuffle Bottoms, but John didn't pay any mind. I stood mute.

The principal said, "What about you, son?"

I couldn't open my mouth. I wanted to bolt right out of that auditorium and run all the way home. But Daddy, I knew, would only whip me and send me back. Mama and Daddy meant for us to get an education if it was the last thing that happened.

John nudged me and the principal said, "Speak up. Won't anybody bite you if you open your mouth."

I opened my mouth and heard my voice, weak and thin, and I could hardly believe I was going through it again, instead of dying like I'd decided I would. "My name is Boy Sword," I said.

"I want your real name, not your nickname," Mr. Smith said.

I gulped. "That's all the name I got," I said miserably. I added, "We just moved to Bugscuffle Bottoms."

They didn't snicker at Bugscuffle Bottoms this time. They had their teeth into better meat. They were snickering at me.

The principal looked baffled, then turned to John. "Is this true?" he asked.

John cleared his throat. "Yes sir. He ain't never been named. So we just call him Boy."

Mr. Smith must have been a kind man. He just said, "All right. We will enter him in as Boy Sword."

As I walked to the back of the room there were whispers from each side, calling, "Boy! Hey, Boy! Hey, No-Name Sword!" I kept my back stiff and my face straight ahead. I hadn't been able to do anything else but suffer it, ever since I could remember.

YOU'VE GOT TO UNDERSTAND my daddy to know what all that name business was about. He was a smart man and educated, too; he had gone all the way through high school when didn't many boys do that. Why, he'd sit and think like somebody else would eat a watermelon, and get just as much enjoyment out of it. He didn't read a whole lot, though he never let a newspaper or a magazine get past him. He didn't look for his ideas anywhere but in his own head. He had a God's plenty of them there.

Daddy had been given an awful first name and had dropped it when he was old enough to decide such things and taken his middle name of Lee. I never knew what that first name was. He decided, when John was born, that it wasn't fair to give somebody a permanent name while he was too young to do anything about it, and so John was called Son. The day he turned ten years old, Daddy told him he could name himself whatever he pleased. John picked his name right off without any trouble, and Daddy, from that day forward, never once called him Son.

When I came along they called me Boy and from the first I had resented it. So when I turned ten, I said to Daddy, "I think *you* ought to pick my name. Every boy's daddy gives him a name to be known by."

"I thought you'd *want* to pick your name," he said. "What about Richard? Richard is a pretty name. Richard Sword."

I turned away. I was as stubborn as an iron-headed mule. "If you want it to be Richard, let it be Richard."

"No," he said. "It was just a suggestion. What do *you* want it to be?"

I looked at him then, hoping he'd understand. John had been Son, which placed him, while I had only been Boy. John had found his name. I didn't want to find mine. I wanted my daddy to put my name on me so it would not only be my name, but his name for me, and I could wear it proud.

"If you'll name me, I'll be satisfied," I said.

When Daddy got an idea it was hard for him to turn loose. "You'll just have to wait, then," he said. "Until such time as you can make up your mind, you will be known as Boy."

*The Least One*

I don't reckon anybody in the world longed to have a name as much as I did. But I felt just as fierce about my right to be named by my father like everybody else, and I wouldn't give in. On my eleventh birthday, Daddy asked me again if I'd picked my name. I shook my head. We came to my twelfth birthday.

"You're pretty nigh a man now," Daddy told me then. "You can't afford to be a man and be called Boy."

"All right then," I said. "Put a name to me."

I guess by then he wished he'd given in to start with. "John didn't make a fuss about it," he pointed out.

"Names don't mean anything to John," I said bitterly. "Why don't you want to be my daddy, anyway?"

"What do you mean?"

"If you're the daddy of something, that gives you the right and the duty to name it," I said. "If you won't name it you might as well not have made it in the first place."

I had thought on that for a whole year and to say it I had to drag it out from the roots of my being. It took him aback.

"Whatever gave you such an idea?" he said.

"You did," I said.

I waited, hoping, while my father sat studying me. "Boy," he said at last. "There will come a time when the name of Boy will stick in your mind like a cocklebur. On that day your real name will rise up in your mind and you will know it. Until that day comes there is nothing either of us can do."

"I hate the word Boy right now," I said.

"No you don't," he said. "You are clinging to it. As long as you can keep from being called anything else, you can be a boy with only the needs and responsibilities of a boy." He sighed, and his eyes had a gentle and loving look. "There is nothing I can do to help you. Even if I could, I wouldn't."

You'd think that I'd have a secret name for myself, tucked away inside me. But where it ought to be was Nothing, like when you probe for a tooth that's been pulled and can feel only its absence. It had stood that way ever since. I hadn't been able to ask him again for my rightful name. I'd have died first.

MRS. LOVELADY, THE TEACHER, was just as nice as she could be. She took me into the class like a stray chicken come home to roost and told me, "Senator Clayton mentioned you to me. I'm proud to have you in my class." It surprised me and made me feel good.

I guess I promptly fell in love with her. She was a blonde, with a nice face and a pretty leg on her. I liked good-looking legs even then. And I quickly found out that she was a good teacher. School itself was going to be all right.

The class were all bigger and older than me, but I was used to that. Seems like I was always the least one, wherever I might be. They were studying me, too, with a gleam in their eyes. I dreaded going out on the school grounds at recess. That's the way that name business always worked; it set me off from everybody else.

The bell rang and we poured out into the cold air. I started for the boys' outhouse but I didn't get far before I was surrounded.

"Hey, Boy, what's your name?" a fat kid said, thrusting his face right into mine.

"Boy," I said sturdily, and they all laughed.

He jostled at me. "That ain't no name," he said.

"I'll bet you something," I said. "I'll bet I can turn flips from here to the outhouse and back without stopping."

Flips were what we called cartwheels. Before he could answer I flipped right on away from that crowd and when I got to the outhouse I didn't come back but went on in. That took care of recess and it pleased me to outsmart them.

Dinner was easier, though longer. After we'd eaten our lunch I went outside with everybody but circled around the building and went back into the empty library. That's one good thing about a new school—you get a shot at books you've never seen before. There was a whole set of Edgar Wallace, about fifteen or twenty books. I started reading.

Mr. Smith came in. "Why aren't you out playing?" he said.

"I wanted to see what books you've got."

"Do you like to read?"

"Yes sir," I said. "And you've got some books I've never read."

"You can check out three books a week."



That was what I wanted to hear. I finally settled on the first two Edgar Wallaces and *Huckleberry Finn*. I wanted to read it again with Senator Clayton looking over my shoulder, so to speak, and see if it sounded any different.

John and I walked behind the school wagon on the way home, just as we did in the morning. "How do you like school?" he asked.

"Fine," I said. "I got three books out of the library. Did you check out any books?" He shook his head. "Will you check out three for me every week, then?" I said. "That way I'll have six."

"What are you going to do when you use them all up?"

"Just like I've always done. Go back and read 'em again."

About that time Luther Moats decided to start in on me, walking behind me saying, louder and louder, "Boy. Boy. Boy. Boy, what a name. Boy, what a name."

John looked at me. "You whipped him this morning," he said. "Don't you think you can do it again?"

Pretty soon Harry Lollard fell in with Luther and started chanting the same tune. I let him say, "Boy, Boy, Boy," about three times before I turned and lit into him.

I was so mad I just bowled him over, books flying in every direction. The girls screamed and ran away. I was sitting straddle of Harry Lollard and hitting his face, with Luther trying to pull me off. I reached up and pulled Luther down into the road. Harry was crying and begging for mercy and I found out I was crying, too. It took John and Odell Raincrow to pull me off.

So I got home with one more enemy than I had set out with and one of the library books had got mud on the cover. I stalked into the house and flung my books at a chair and missed.

Mama came in from the kitchen. "How was school?" she asked anxiously.

"School is all right," I said. "It's the coming and the going that I can't stand." I started to cry again. Mama looked at John.

"He put in most of his time fighting and turning flips," John said in a critical voice. "Dogged if I don't think I liked it better when he was a coward."

I was stung by the betrayal. "You *made* me fight Luther," I

yelled. "And wouldn't any of it happen if I had me a name like everybody else."

I slammed out the back door and ran smack-dab into Daddy, coming from the woodpile with an armload of wood. "Whoa, now," he said. "What's the matter, Boy?"

"That's the matter," I yelled. "Why can't you be like every other daddy and name a person without all this to-do?"

I slashed around him and took off for the barn where I climbed into the empty cornercrib and sat down to contemplate my fate. But it never crossed my stubborn mind to give in and name myself, because there was still Nothing where my name ought to be.

#### CHAPTER IV

THE FIRST we knew about the commodities was when a bunch of men came out from town and began building a log cabin a quarter of a mile up the road. Everybody talked about what they were up to. Within a week there was a one-room log building, with a solid door padlocked against curiosity. All anybody knew for sure was that it was some more of the government's doings.

Senator Clayton brought the first straight word to a group of Bugscuffle men gathered at the artesian well, watering the work stock, one evening. "That log building up there," he said, sitting in his shiny A-model. "It's a commodities building."

His statement didn't enlighten anybody and he had to elaborate. "It's a government relief program. You all can go in and sign up and then you'll get commodities as regular as rain."

The men looked at each other, nodding their heads. "That sounds mighty fine, Senator," Mr. Moats said politely. "I guess that's what we needed, all right."

"Tell me one thing, Senator," Mr. Raincrow said. "What in the hell is commodities?"

Senator Clayton looked startled; then he said, "Commodities are groceries. The government aims to help you out with your rations, see that the young'uns get plenty to eat."

Old Man Roberts shook his head. "I've been on this earth longer than any man here, Senator, and ain't no government ever worried its head about what I got to put on my table."

"It's a brand-new government we've got now," Senator Clayton said. "Commodities is the surplus food they've bought from farmers who didn't have any market anymore, so they're distributing it to folks who need it. I want every one of you to sign up, now. It'll ease your store credit considerable."

The men went away to think it over separately. Daddy walked slow and thoughtful to the house and by the time I got there they were already talking about it.

"You can call it commodities from now to doomsday," Mama said. "But I ain't never took charity and I don't aim to start now."

"We took the mules," Daddy pointed out.

"We got to pay them back, don't we?" Mama said. "If they'll let me pay back the commodities come fall, I'll be glad to go up there and stand in line for my share."

"They ain't got it set up for payback," Daddy said.

Mama turned away. "Then I don't want no part of it."

Daddy said, "Pet, we got two boys to feed and a long time before we can even put in a garden, much less take out of it. How many fruit jars of stuff have you got left?"

"I'll eat corn bread for breakfast before I take charity," she said in an angry, strident voice. "I can still go to Bellefonte and find work in the chenille factory if you push me to it, Lee Sword."

Daddy just stood there, between a rock and a hard place. John was sitting in front of the fireplace, with nothing to say. Come to think of it, I didn't, either.

Mama sat down sudden in a chair. "We just keep on going down and down and down," she said. "Ain't there no bottom to what a person's got to do? First we lost all we had. I don't blame you for it, Lee, because you couldn't help it. All the time we lived hand-to-mouth, picking blackberries and going to Arkansas, you were doing the best you could." Her voice rose. "But I blamed you for coming to Bugscuffle Bottoms."

"That was have-to, right on," Daddy said quietly.

She looked around the dark little bungalow. "I come from folks that stood with their heads proud," she said. "Dirt poor, but they kept themselves clean and they worked hard. They didn't swap work and live in each other's laps. I just can't come to it, Lee."

Mama—none of us—didn't know anything about the desperate currents that were sweeping the nation. The country was in a bad shape and it just didn't seem that any answers lay in the direction the nation had always taken, for we had lost faith in the power of the individual. We'd had a man in the White House talking about rugged individualism and not doing anything and he had just about spoiled that word for everybody.

Mama couldn't have put the right words to her feelings no more than a snapping turtle. She just had a deep-down instinct that the way you go about fixing something is as important as getting it fixed in the first place.

"Pet," Daddy said in that quiet voice that gave her all the houseroom he could afford to give. "I got a credit at the grocery store that Senator Clayton fixed for me. We start eating on that now, it ain't going to run us until the crop comes in. I don't ask you to do it for you or for me. I ask you to do it for the boys."

Mama rose up from the chair. "I'll tell you what I'm afraid of," she said. "I'm afraid these sons of yours will decide they ain't no different from the rest of the Bugscuffle Bottoms folks."

"These are fine people," Daddy said.

"They've give up something that I ain't as yet give up," Mama said in a hard, proud voice. "They've got the sit-arounds, waiting for Senator Clayton to tell them when to plow and when to plant, and to go get their commodities, and all. My folks never needed nobody to tell them when to plow and to plant."

"If we come up to the spring work half starved, we won't be able to do our share," Daddy said.

"Then why ain't you out looking for work instead of waiting for the government to hand you a sack full of groceries?"

Daddy didn't get mad often. When he did, it was a sight to behold. "Do you think I ain't looked?" he said in a fierce voice. He advanced on her. "Even if there was a job, they wouldn't give

it to me because I'd have to tell them I've got a crop to put in."

"I would lie before I took charity."

He was right on her then and Mama was flinching. I thought he was going to hit her and I was tensed and ready to go for him, even if he was my daddy. John sat with his face turned away, as though he didn't hear what was going on.

Daddy didn't even lift his hand. He just stood quiet. Then he said, "You don't have to do anything, Pet. I'll sign up for those commodities. I will go get them and bring them home. It's up to you, then, whether or not you will put them on the table."

He walked out of the house. Mama went into the kitchen. I decided I'd better go to the corner for a little quiet reading.

DADDY walked in to town on the Friday. When he came back, just before suppertime, he was toting a pig under his arm.

Mama, with a wary expression, watched him step into the house, set down in a chair, and stretch out his feet in front of the fire. It was a long seven or eight miles from town on a cold day. He held the pig in his lap, soothing it, and that pretty little pig just cuddled under the weight of Daddy's warm hand.

"Well," Mama said at last. "Is that the commodities that the government furnished you out of the kindness of their heart? I don't think it'll stretch for more than one meal."

Daddy sat cuddling that pig and warming his feet. "This-here commodity is going to stretch for a thousand meals to come," he said contentedly. "Didn't no government give her to me, neither."

Mama stood with both hands knuckled on hips. "Lee Sword!" she said. "You come walking in toting a pig and act like it's nothing at all. I know you didn't have dime one in your pocket this morning. Where in the world did you get that pig?"

Daddy leaned back in his chair, mightily pleased with himself. "Why, ma'am," he said, "I come by this fine little pig by the natural exercise of my native wit. After I got all signed up for them commodities I walked around to the Jockey Yard, figuring I just might catch me a ride home. A feller there in a truck had a winter litter of pigs to sell. Eight of the prettiest Big Bone Pole

and Chinas you ever did see—tough enough to take care of themselves when you turn them out to range, and yet they'll cook up tender and sweet as can be. I stood there wanting one of those little pigs so bad I could taste it.

"How much you take for one of them pigs?" I said, standing there with empty pockets. He said, 'I'm asking four dollars apiece.'

"A fellow came along, paid out four dollars without a murmur, and took his pick of the litter. One gone.

"I poked the least one of the lot—little old Betsy here, the runt of the litter—and said, 'You aim to stand there bald-faced and tell me you'd ask four dollars for a runt like that?'

"That's what I'm telling you,' he said, and right before my eyes he proceeded to sell another pig. I stood there and thought and while I was thinking another one sold.

"I went away to the blacksmith shop and started scrounging around on the floor. I said, 'You don't mind me picking up three or four used horseshoe nails, do you?'

"Here, take a handful of new ones,' the blacksmith said.

"Thank you kindly,' I said. 'All I need are six. Now, if you will lend me one of your hammers, I'll be much obliged.'

"There wasn't no difficulty about that, either. I went over in the corner and made me a horseshoe-nail puzzle."

"What's a horseshoe-nail puzzle?" I said.

Daddy looked down at me. "Bend three horseshoe nails into each other in a certain way and if you don't know exactly how to go about it you can spend the balance of your natural life trying to take them apart. If you do know how, it takes about two seconds. Well, I took that puzzle back over to the fellow selling pigs. He had three left. I leaned against the side of the truck while he sold another pig, and all the time I was fooling with that puzzle, putting it together and taking it apart over and over again. When the customer had gone he turned to me. 'What's that you've got?'

"Oh, just a little old horseshoe-nail puzzle. Any child can work it. Made it to take home to my least one, as a matter of fact.'

"Another fellow came along and bought the next-to-last pig. Then he turned to me again. 'That looks pretty easy.'

"'Why, there's nothing to it.' I tossed it to him, all linked together. 'Anybody with walking-around sense can figure it out.'"

"Naturally, he started messing with it. A fellow come by, studied little Betsy so long my breath locked in my throat. But the seller was trapped by three shiny horseshoe nails bent around each other and wouldn't even talk to him. That's all there was to it," Daddy said in a contented voice. "I don't aim to eat Miss Betsy; no sir, she's my brood stock." He looked at Mama. "The Swords have hit bottom and started coming up."

Mama had an exasperated look. "You ain't said till yet how you managed to fetch that pet pig home with you."

"Why, he gave me Betsy in exchange for showing him how to work that puzzle," he said mildly. "After he'd fussed with it and wore himself out at it and got mad and thrown it down two or three times, he was proud to make the trade."

"How did you know he couldn't figure it out?" John said.

Daddy looked at John, then at me. "Well, now, that's what makes me ashamed of myself," he said. "The puzzle I tossed him, a body couldn't have worked it without a pair of pliers. When I showed him how, I switched to the honest puzzle, and he never knew the difference." He sighed and laughed at the same time. "I did give him the honest puzzle to keep, so maybe he come out close to even. That's what I like to think, anyway."

"I wondered all the time why you borrowed *six* nails," I said.

Daddy stood up. "Howsomever, she's ours now. I need a box, Jimmie, to fix her a warm place behind the kitchen stove."

Mama rose. "If you aim to raise that pig in the house . . ."

"Just till the cold weather goes and she's got some size on her," Daddy said. "Remember—she's the runt of the litter."

I think to this day that Daddy did it all just to take Mama's mind off of the commodities; though he made a tale out of it for the rest of his life. Most always, though, he'd leave out the part about the puzzle that couldn't be taken apart.

On the day the commodities was to be given out, every man in Bugscuffle Bottoms seemed to have something urgent to do and the women had to go collect the free food. All except Mama. It-

was Daddy who stood in line on Commodity Day. You never saw so much stuff in your life. There was flour and yellow cornmeal and rice and potatoes. There was sugar and salt and coffee beans, and butter that smelled old and bitter. There was beans and peas and a side of bacon and a hunk of fatback. There was, last of all, a green mesh bag with GRAPEFRUIT written out on it. It was more food than I could remember being in our house since Daddy had got fired at the planing mill.

Mama stared at it all, then shook her head. "I reckon the weevils will get half of the meal and the flour and the rice before we can ever use it up." To my surprise, she had tears in her eyes.

Daddy put his hand to her shoulder. "Pet, if you're going to cry about it, blamed if I won't stuff it in the sack and take it back."

"No you won't, either," she said indignantly. "My boys are going to eat right for a change." So she had ferreted out some good in the commodities after all.

The big grapefruit argument didn't start till next morning because everybody was too busy eating on that first night to think about them. Hadn't nobody in Bugscuffle Bottoms ever even seen a grapefruit before. The first woman who went to the well the next morning asked the second woman, "What did you figure out to do with your grapefruit?"

"Well now," Mrs. Raincrow told Mrs. Moats. "I set out to fry it for breakfast. Didn't fry worth a flip."

"I boiled mine," Mrs. Moats said. "I wouldn't bother if I were you. It ain't hardly worth the effort."

Another woman came, and another. I tell you, you never saw such a baffled bunch of women in your life. "Maybe you're supposed to peel 'em, and pickle the rind," Old Woman Roberts said. "You know, like watermelon." The women fell silent as Mama came with her bucket. She had received them in her house when they came to call, but she had not set foot over any other thresh-old. She nodded politely, filled her bucket, and started away.

"Mrs. Sword, what did you do with your grapefruit?" Mrs. Raincrow inquired.

Mama stopped. "Why, I ain't messed with them at all yet."



They descended on her, trying to tell her all at once how they had done the grapefruit.

Mama looked from one to the other. "You-all come on to my house and let's study them grapefruit," she said.

They followed her to the house and crowded around while she laid a grapefruit on the dining table. It might as well have been a bomb, for all they knew to do with it. Mama sliced it down the middle, and they all stared at the two neat halves. "Well now," Mama said. "It says grapefruit on the bag. You eat a grape raw, and a lot of fruit you eat raw. Anybody try it raw?"

"I did," Mrs. Raincrow said. "Some folks in foreign parts might care for it. But not me."

Mama took a tablespoon and scooped out a bite. You'd have thought she'd bit down on a green persimmon. She swallowed the sour taste. "Anybody try putting stuff on it?"

They all shook their heads.

"Salt, maybe," Mama said, and sprinkled salt liberally on one of the halves. "Now, everybody try it."

They bravely tried the salted half. Didn't anybody like it.

"Sugar, then," Mama said, and sugared the other half.

They tasted, and looked from one to the other. It took a while to realize the combination of sweet and sour on their tongues.

"That's it," Mama said triumphantly. "Sugar it good, and it's a new kind of dessert the government has thought up for us."

Mama made her place amongst them right then by her smart way of going about it. She could rest content in the knowledge that she had done her bit for Bugscuffle Bottoms.

## CHAPTER V

SPRING was upon us before you could turn around twice and spit to the four winds. One day winter, the next day a soft feel to the air and a mockingbird singing tuneful in a tall tree. School romped out; it would take up during laying-by time, for six more weeks, and then turn out again when the cotton made.

If ever Daddy was a happy man, it was now. Every spring he planted, plowed and harvested the perfect crop before ever he stuck plowpoint in ground. He walked light on the earth and if you didn't watch out he'd hit you on the head out of sheer good feeling. The urge to plow was growing in him, but this year it was not up to him. Morning and evening the men gathered at the artesian well to consult about the time for the great starting.

"Why do you have to wait on the others, anyway?" Mama said.

"It's the custom, Jimmie," Daddy said patiently. "We plow and plant together, starting in one field and going on to the others. We'll hoe out the crop and pick it in the same way."

"There's just one thing wrong with that custom," Mama said. "The idea that every man's work is the same."

"That's how it's always been here," Daddy said. "A man's work counts a full day, a woman's work three-quarters, and a boy's work a half, up till he's fifteen years old. Do you want these folks to think I believe my day's work is better than theirs?"

"It don't make no whole lot of nevermind to me what they think," Mama said. "It ain't nothing but the truth. Mark my word, you're going to find somebody lagging in the traces like old Tony. *Then* what are you doing to do?"

"I've given away days of my time before. Many's the time I've helped work out a man's crop when he was sick or hurt."

"I'm not against helping somebody," Mama said inflexibly. "I am against having to count on other folks in things that's a person's own rightful doing."

The very next morning, the men were talking anxiously, knowing the time had come but knowing they had to have the word before they could begin, when they heard the A-model coming.

Senator Clayton leaned out from the car. "Well, men," he said. "I reckon we better get at it."

Every man hurried home to catch and harness his mules. Mr. Raincrow drove a wagon from barn to barn picking up the plow tools, single-wing turning plows and section harrows and middle-busters. Going down the pasture lane to the fields, the men were laughing and carrying on like they were going fishing instead

of starting a year's work that wouldn't let up until the crops were in, the cotton ginned and baled, the corn safe in the cribs.

At the first field—one of Mr. Raincrow's—the wagon was unloaded. Mr. Moats hitched his team of big black mules to the middlebuster while the other men and boys hitched single mules to single-wing turning plows. It was a sight to see, those turning plows moving up and down, peeling off the edges of last year's rows, followed by the slower-moving middlebuster, the mules sweating and their muscles rippling. Sweat of the body, and jingle of the harnesses, and behind the plows the shiny neat layers of soil burnished by the bright steel of the plow wings.

Mama to the contrary, it was exciting to have everybody working the same field, the men talking and joking as they passed. John had Prince hitched to a turning plow and was going up and down the rows like a man among men. I was told off to tote water in cedar kegs from the artesian well for the men to drink, and to water the teams. We took dinner in the fields, and after dinner the men sprawled around in the shade and told stories for an hour before going back to work until half past dark.

"I will tell you plain," Daddy said at supper. "It is good to work land again. I have been a man without land far too long."

From the way Mama looked at him, I knew that she truly loved this Lee Sword she had married.

It was during the spring plowing that Grandpaw Smith came to stay with us. Ever since Grandmaw had died, Grandpaw Smith was accustomed to visiting around with his sons and daughters, staying a few months at each place. He liked best to stay with Uncle Cliff, his youngest son, so he spent most of his time there.

Mama wrote to Uncle Cliff, saying now that we had room she sure would like to have Grandpaw come for a visit. So one day Uncle Cliff arrived in his wagon with Grandpaw Smith sitting on the spring seat beside him, hat square on his head and his black cardboard suitcase at his feet.

Grandpaw Smith was a fine-looking man in his seventies, thin, with a proud neck on him. His face was lean and spare, and his

eye was as bright as an eagle's. I liked the way he moved inside his body, even if he was old and slow. He climbed stiffly down over the wheel and took his time looking at the place.

"Well, Daughter," he said. "I don't like the way you're living, folks right in your lap like this."

"Now, Paw," Uncle Cliff said. "That ain't no way to talk."

Mama had flushed up. "It beats living on Uncle Gabe's charity," she said. "Besides, it gives us room to have our kinfolks come visiting, Papa."

Grandpaw Smith came up the steps, putting his feet down carefully. "How are you, Mr. Smith?" Daddy said. "It's sure nice to have you for a visit."

"I'm fine, Mr. Sword," Grandpaw Smith said. "I don't think I'll be able to stay long this time, though. Never did like to live in with a whole bunch of people."

Daddy had always liked his father-in-law; Grandpaw Smith liked Daddy, too. They'd sit and talk for hours; yet they never called each other anything but Mr. Smith and Mr. Sword.

Grandpaw Smith put his hand on John's shoulder, looked into his face. He did the same with me. "They do grow, don't they?" he said. "They like it here?"

"Yes sir, they seem to," Daddy said.

Grandpaw Smith snorted. "Never thought I'd see the day a daughter of mine would live in a place called Bugscuffle Bottoms. My family always lived on their own land, Mr. Sword."

"Now, Papa, Lee has done the best he could do!" Mama said. "It's hard times, and you know it."

"We had our hard times," Grandpaw Smith said in the same inflexible tone I'd heard Mama use. He was the father of his daughter, all right.

"You never saw cotton at four cents a pound," Mama said. She was half mad and her face was flushed.

Grandpaw Smith studied her, a grin quirking at his mouth. "Daughter, you always did have a temper to go with your red hair," he said. "You're already so mad at me you could spit, and I ain't yet set foot in the house."

"Papa," Mama said, and her voice broke. She put her hand on his sleeve. "Papa, I'm proud you could come."

"I'm proud, too, Daughter," Grandpaw Smith said. "Now, if I can set down . . . That wagon jolting can purely tire a body out."

I'd hoped Uncle Cliff would stay overnight. I always liked him, and he could play the French harp like crazy. But he had his own plowing to do, so he ate dinner and started on his way. Grandpaw Smith took a straight chair to the front porch and sat down, watching Uncle Cliff climb up to the wagon seat.

"I may have Daughter drop you a postcard in a day or two, Cliff," he called.

"Now you stay a while, Paw," Uncle Cliff said. "I don't want to have made this long trip for nothing."

"You'll come, though, when I call on you, won't you?" Grandpaw Smith said anxiously.

"You just enjoy yourself," Uncle Cliff said. He drove away.

Grandpaw Smith watched Mrs. Lollard come to the well for a bucket of water. "Ain't sure I'm going to like it," he said to nobody in particular. "Don't aim to claim to when I don't, neither."

We had four beds, two in the living room, two in the bedroom. Mama gave Grandpaw Smith John's bed and moved John into the living room. That left me with Grandpaw Smith, which was just the way I liked it. I figured he'd tell me stories about his days in the Texas Rangers and when he'd gone prospecting for gold. It was said he'd killed three men in his time and maybe he'd tell me about that, too.

Grandpaw Smith announced that he'd better unpack.

"I'll help you, Papa," Mama said with alacrity. "Maybe you'll have some things that'll need washing and ironing."

"I know you don't think much of your brother Cliff's wife," Grandpaw Smith said. "But Honeybelle wouldn't send me visitin' with dirty clothes."

Mama got up and stalked into the house. Grandpaw Smith grinned at Daddy and stood up to go with her. "If Daughter gets as mad as often with you as she does with me, Mr. Sword, I don't know how you've lived with her all these years."

"You do egg her on," Daddy said mildly. "Your daughter is the finest wife a man could hope to have, Mr. Smith."

Grandpaw Smith looked taken aback for a minute. "I didn't say she wasn't," he said. "I didn't have to go to Texas for no year to figure that out, either."

I followed him into the house. Grandpaw Smith sat on his bed and watched Mama unpack his suitcase. There were pairs of winter underwear, folded neat and clean; another suit exactly like the one he had on; five white shirts; his Mexican blanket; his straight razor, with a white bone handle; and his shaving mug with his name curlicued on it. Mama reached for the next thing and drew back her hand like a snake had bit her.

Grandpaw Smith looked to see what it was. "Hand me that hogleg pistol," he said. "I keep that under my pillow."

"I won't," Mama said. "You know I'm afraid of guns."

Grandpaw Smith looked at me. "Hand me . . . They put a name to you yet?"

"No sir." I was so embarrassed I could hardly get it out.

He snorted. "Hand me that hogleg pistol, Boy," he said.

I reached into the suitcase. The barrel looked to be a yard long. The handles were white ivory and there was a naked woman carved into the ivory on either side.

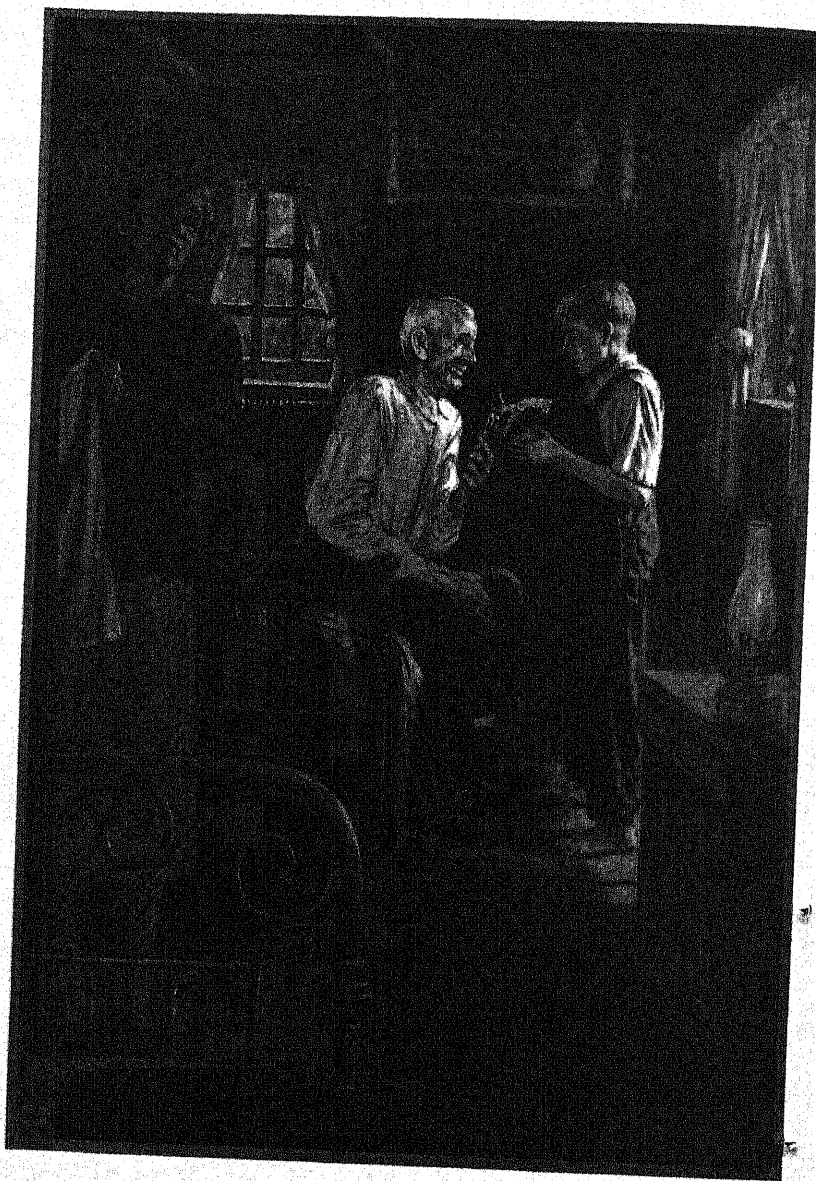
"You ever seen a gun like that, Boy?" Grandpaw Smith said as I handed it to him. "Got that whilst I was riding with the Texas Rangers. It's a Colt forty-five. The gun that won the West. See them pretty grips I taken off a Mexican?"

"Don't you be showing them handles to a growing boy," Mama said sharply.

"Now, that's what I call a pretty piece of woman flesh, Boy. Careful now. That gun is loaded."

"Papa, to hand a boy a loaded gun, and with naked women . . ."

"A man's got to know guns and a man's got to know women," Grandpaw Smith said. "He looks to me like he's ready to start out any day in them areas of knowledge." He turned to me. "We'll take a walk in the woods one of these days, Boy. Then I'll show you how it shoots. That gun has got its man, Boy."



"Did *you* kill a man with it?" I said eagerly.

Grandpaw Smith shook his head firmly. "Let me give you one thing to remember the days of your life, Boy. Never talk about a woman you have had the using of, nor a man you have killed."

"Papal" Mama said in a despairing voice.

"Get that suitcase unpacked, Daughter," Grandpaw Smith said. "Me and this boy here are talking man-talk, even if he ain't got a name to call his own till yet."

Mama ducked her head and went on unpacking. She came to a framed picture, faded brown, made on Grandpaw Smith's wedding day. He took it from her and propped it carefully on the chifforobe. "Your mama was a woman-and-a-half," he told Mama. "But she's done gone on and left me behind." I can't describe the tone of voice he said those words in.

The last thing was a heavy leather bag tied at the throat with a rawhide thong. "I'll take that," Grandpaw Smith said. "It goes under my pillow with the gun."

"If that's money," Mama said, "somebody's going to knock you in the head and take it off of you, first thing you know."

"Not as long as I've got that hogleg pistol," Grandpaw Smith said. "Yes sir, Daughter. That's all of my getting, right there in that little sack. Ain't much to show for a lifetime, is it?"

His words touched Mama; she put her hand on his shoulder. "You've got a lot more to show than that," she said.

He looked up at her and smiled. "What's in that bag is to be divided share and share alike between you and Cliff and Charlie and Jane. I got my funeral all paid for." He hefted the bag. "I just wish there was more to it. A man can live a full life and all he's got to show for it is a little leather bag tied with a string." He shook his head. "Sometimes I don't understand what's going on in this world."

Mama sighed. "If anybody knows, I wish they'd tell me. The day I sat in that buggy and married Lee Sword, I thought . . ."

"It don't matter so much how you wind up as how you live the day-to-day," Grandpaw Smith said. "That's why I don't take to this kind of Bugscuffle Bottoms living you've got yourself into."



Mama got an eagle look to her eye, making her favor him so close that it was scary to see. "I don't want you going around faulting Lee to his face about it."

She walked out, her back straight. Grandpaw Smith gazed after her. "Your mama is right, too," he said, surprisingly.

"*She* doesn't like it here," I said. "I don't know why she won't let you say the very same things she's been talking herself."

"A woman can fault her own man," Grandpaw Smith said. "But if there's any salt to her at all she won't let nobody else do it, least of all her own daddy. Now, let's set on the porch and watch the folks go by."

With the spring plowing going on, it became my job to look after Grandpaw Smith. He was so old and frail that Mama was afraid to leave him by himself. "Don't let him know you've been told off to keep your eye on him," she warned me.

I never saw a man use up a day like Grandpaw Smith. Up at first daylight, he didn't go to bed till good dark. He liked to walk, moving without a cane, slow but vigorous, getting over more ground than it was easy to believe. Before the week was out he knew every field in Bugscuffle Bottoms and had taken me as far as the Tuxahatchie River, in yellow springtime flood. "That river is just full of catfish," he said. "You can tell by looking."

He'd stop here and yonder to listen to a bird singing, or to watch a cloud drift over, and sometimes, it seemed like, just to watch a patch of grass grow. "This world is a mighty place, Boy," he told me one day. "You go through it unheedful when you're young. But once you start to count your days, you take note of things. Human nature is contrary; it don't value anything except what it's about to lose."

"I read that in a book," I said. "Or pretty much like it."

He looked at me levelly for a long time. "You're a plain fool about reading, ain't you?" he said.

I was rather abashed. "I reckon so," I said.

"I never was much for book learning. But I'll tell you what. You read to me out of some of them books of yourn." From then on I'd take a book along and when he'd stop to rest I'd read out

loud. He listened attentively but never did say if he liked it.

He didn't neglect people, either. He called at every house in Bugscuffle Bottoms, saying, "I'm Mr. Smith that's staying a visit with Mr. Sword. Just thought I'd come by and make myself known to you." He'd sit on the porch, then, and talk for ten minutes or so, listening with courteous attention to his host or hostess, finally saying, "Well, it's been right fine," and walking away.

It was on a Sunday night that he took up my cause. We were all sitting on the front porch, resting. Hadn't anybody spoke for some time when Grandpaw Smith cleared his throat. "Mr. Sword," he said. "I think you're called on to give this boy here a name."

It come so unexpected my breath locked in my lungs. Daddy said, "That's something I've left up to him, though he can't seem to settle on one. I figure he will, one of these days."

"It ain't right for a boy not to be named by his father," Grandpaw Smith said. "You wouldn't do a mule so, Mr. Sword."

I felt a warmth start in my chest. Maybe I'd go to bed tonight named, like everybody else. I could just see Luther Moats calling me Boy and me saying loftily, "That's not my name. My name is \_\_\_\_." But the blank place was still there.

"I figure a mule ain't got no naming sense," Daddy said. "I rate Boy a little higher in the scale than I'd rate a mule."

"Daughter, what have you got to say?" Grandpaw Smith said.

"Papa," she said. "When John come ten, he picked his own name without any fuss. There's something in Boy that keeps him from doing the same. It's between him and his daddy."

"Mr. Sword, it's a proud act for most men to name their sons," Grandpaw Smith said. "I reckon you must have a reason."

"It's not the sort of thinking that's easy to put into words, Mr. Smith," Daddy said. "It's always seemed to me that a man's name marks his place in the eternal universe. So he's got to come to his own name in his own way. He'll find it one of these days. Won't you, Boy?"

My tongue was suddenly tied. Grandpaw Smith leaned forward. "Want me to name you, Boy?"

"I want Daddy to name me," I just managed to choke out.

"He's as stubborn as a two-headed mule," Daddy said.

"You always did overwork your brain, Mr. Sword," Grandpaw Smith said. "That's why you had to go to Texas for a year, leaving my daughter weeping behind you. It wasn't enough to love her and want to marry her. You had to work out a theory into which the marrying fitted like one plank into an entire house."

"A man is called to think," Daddy said quietly. "I reckon we'll just wait until he feels moved to solve the problem himself."

"I've got a feeling Boy will grow to manhood and beyond," Grandpaw Smith said, "and he will never do for himself what you refuse to do." He got up and went into the house.

When I went to bed, Grandpaw Smith was already asleep, one hand under the pillow where he kept his hogleg pistol and his sack of money. I looked into his old and sleeping face in the late-rising moonlight and I was grateful to him, though I knew he hadn't been able to help matters any more than I could myself.

Two days later, Grandpaw Smith said to Mama over breakfast, "Daughter, I wish you'd drop Cliff a postal card. It's been a right nice visit, but it has come time for me to go home."

"Papa, you've no more than got here. You're not a smidgin of trouble. Now, quit talking that way and eat your breakfast."

"Tell Cliff to come on the Sunday," Grandpaw Smith said. "I don't want him to lose time with his crops on my account."

Mama sighed. "Boy, you'll find a postcard in the drawer of the sewing machine. Fetch it. And the pencil, too."

Mama wrote out the postcard and handed it to me. "Take that to the mailbox," she said.

The mailbox was on the gravel road. Everybody in Bug-scuffle Bottoms used the same one, which had been put up by Senator Clayton, who got most of the mail, too. I stood by the mailbox and read the postcard. It was not a fair statement.

Dear Brother Cliff, Papa is already talking about you coming to get him. I don't know why he wants to be so restless at his age. I wrote this to pacify him. We are fine and hope you are the same, Your Sister Jimmie.

I put the card in the box and raised the faded red flag, feeling like a traitor because Grandpaw Smith had come out on my side. But I didn't dare tell him the truth; I stayed away from him for the rest of the day.

Which was easy. That very morning Grandpaw Smith gave up walking and looking at the world. He spent the week in his straight chair on the front porch, though he was not expecting Cliff until Sunday. He was as pleasant as ever and told me several tales he hadn't got around to before. I read to him, too.

On Saturday he packed his suitcase. He let me hold the pistol again, and admire the naked women on the handles. "We never did get a chance to fire it off, did we?" he said. "Next time we will, Boy. Next time we will."

"You will come back, won't you?" I said anxiously.

He smiled, very slowly. "I'll be back, God willing."

That night he went to bed earlier than usual and was up with first light and sitting on the porch. He waited on the porch all day Sunday for Uncle Cliff. He had his cardboard suitcase by the side of his chair because, with plowing to do tomorrow, he knew Uncle Cliff wouldn't tarry long.

I couldn't stand it. I caught Mama in the kitchen fixing Sunday dinner. "What are you going to do?" I asked her.

She wouldn't look at me. "He knows he's supposed to stay a month or two at the least," she said.

Just then Daddy came in. "What are you going to do about your papa?" he said.

"He knows he's not going anywhere," Mama said. "He's being stubborn, that's all. In his own good time he'll take that suitcase back to his room and unpack."

"You ought to tell him what you wrote on the postcard," I said. "It's not fair to let him think . . ."

She turned on me. "I reckon you read it before you mailed it. Why didn't you tell him yourself?" She glared at me for a minute, then she softened. "Boy, he's an old man. He's become as a child again and you have to treat him like a child for his own good."

John was standing in the kitchen doorway. He had put on clean

overalls and shirt. "I'll hitch up the team and take him," he said to Mama. He shifted his eyes to Daddy. "I can be home by daylight, or some later, if I hurry."

"You won't do any such a thing," Mama said. "Now, you-all clear out of my way. I can't cook in a kitchen full of menfolks."

Mama worked hard on that Sunday dinner. When Grandpaw Smith was called to the table he looked at the good meal, and smiled, and said, "Ain't you planning to wait until Cliff gets here? Maybe Honeybelle will come, too, this time, even though she knows you don't give her the houseroom you'd give a cat."

"It'll get cold and not fit to eat," Mama said. "Sit down and light in, Papa. All of you."

Grandpaw Smith ate a hearty meal and returned to the porch. Sundown came in its time and he ate supper, out of the cold leavings of the big dinner. After supper he went directly to bed.

The next morning he was gone.

I knew he was gone the minute I woke up, before I even looked at his bed. I knew also that he was not just up and about early but that he had left Bugscuffle Bottoms for good. The room had a cold and empty feeling.

His suitcase was gone, too, of course. I went to the front porch, then around the house and barn. I returned to the living room and stood over Mama's and Daddy's bed. It was just pearl dawn through the windows and a rooster crowed in Mrs. Raincrow's backyard. I shook Daddy by the shoulder. "Grandpaw Smith is up and gone," I said. "Suitcase and all."

Daddy sat up alertly. "Are you sure?" he said.

"Yes sir, I looked all around."

"Jimmie," he said, reaching for his clothes. "Your father . . ."

"I heard," Mama said. "What are you going to do?"

"I'm going after him. Boy, hitch the mules to the wagon."

"The worst thing you can do is go after him," Mama said. "It's best to wait for him to come back of his own accord."

Daddy paused in snapping the overall buttons at his sides. "You can't mean that, Jimmie."

She sat up, holding the bedclothes against her chest. "I can't

mean anything else," she said. "He's too old to walk thirty mile or more, without his breakfast, too. He'll have to come back."

"What if you're wrong, Jimmie?" Daddy said. "The Smiths don't pay much attention to have-to."

I didn't wait to hear her answer. I was already out the front door and running toward the gravel road. They could stay there yammering, but I meant to go after Grandpaw Smith before he wore himself out in the hot sun that was just now coming cool over the morning's horizon.

I went the mile to school and I still hadn't seen hide nor hair of him. It was already too big a proposition to handle by myself, but I couldn't stop. Just over each hill or around the next curve I expected to see his spare, black-clad figure. Each time I was disappointed; and each time the next hill or the next curve tolled me onward.

It was midmorning when I came to the forks where you went straight on to town or turned south. He'd take the south road straight down the county toward home. I hadn't been on this road since we'd moved to Uncle Gabe's and already it seemed strange to me. I began to feel as though I were running away myself. It was with considerable relief, soon after, that I heard a wagon grating behind me and looked back to recognize Prince and Tony. Daddy was moving those mules along right brisk. He halted beside me. "Ain't had a whole lot of luck, have you?" he said.

"No sir," I said.

"Must have set out as soon as we were asleep," he said. "That old man has walked all night. Toting that suitcase. Your mama's going to tear your hide off, Boy. I reckon you know that."

"Yes sir," I said. "I know it."

I drooped by the road, hot and dusty and thirsty, standing on the sides of my sore feet. "Get in the wagon," he said.

I climbed up beside him and we went on.

We caught up to Grandpaw Smith about an hour later. He was leaning against the road bank with his black cardboard suitcase by his side, his face shadowed with his big hat and his eyes closed.

It hurt me to see him. His neat clothes were dusty and sweaty

and there was a white-stone look to his face. He didn't open his eyes when Daddy stopped.

"Get in, Mr. Smith," Daddy said. "Boy, take his suitcase."

Grandpaw Smith opened his eyes then; they were dull and lusterless. "You didn't have to come all this way after me, Mr. Sword," he said in a flat and toneless voice. "I have taken you out of your fields on a day of spring plowing."

Daddy looped the reins around the standard and climbed down after me. I put the suitcase into the wagon. Daddy put his hand into Grandpaw Smith's armpit and Grandpaw Smith didn't try to fight his aid. We got him over the wheel and into the spring seat. I climbed into the back.

Something inside Grandpaw Smith that had been holding him up must have let go the minute he knew he was safe. As he sat down he folded over into himself and fell forward against the front boards of the wagon bed, Daddy grabbing at him to keep him from pitching under the heels of the mules.

"We've got to stretch him out in the wagon bed," Daddy said. "Here. Help me lift the seat out of the way." Moving the seat gave us room to straighten him out. His face was pale and his lips had a marble look. "Hold his head in your lap, Boy."

Daddy turned the team and we started for home at a fast clip. Sitting on the floor of the wagon bed, I held Grandpaw Smith's head in my lap as easy and comfortable as possible.

Mama was standing on the front porch when we got home. She took one look at the still body, then she turned into the house, saying, "Fetch him on. I'll have the bed ready. John, bring some fresh water from the well."

I brought the water because it took John and Daddy to tote Grandpaw Smith into the house. They stretched him on the bed and Mama put a wet rag on his forehead.

There was no more work that day in Bugscuffle Bottoms. The men came up out of the fields to say a word, then went to the well to wait. The women, by the middle of the afternoon, were bringing food. Mama hadn't come out of the bedroom.

Daddy sat on the porch and smoked a whole sack of Country

Gentleman smoking tobacco, one hand-rolled cigarette after the other. John sat on the steps and didn't say anything. Daddy and I didn't have anything to say, either.

He died at the end of the long day. The sun was just touching the horizon when Mama came out of the house. She looked tall and rawboned and ravaged in face and in spirit.

"He's gone," she said. "He never roused up, not even to speak one word." She sat down on the steps and put her face into her hands. "A body does the best they can, and then it ain't enough. Why ain't it ever enough?"

Daddy went to her, put his strong hand on her shoulder and held it hard. But I don't think that it helped her very much.

## CHAPTER VI

WE TOOK Grandpaw Smith to the place he had been walking to reach, for there in the yard of a country church was the Smith family burying ground where wife and kinfolk already waited. Odell Raincrow tuned up his T-model to take us, and miraculously it didn't break down.

Everybody came all the way back to our house for the dividing-up because Mama was the oldest. So after the burying Uncle Cliff, leaving Honeybelle at home to mind the children, Uncle Charlie and Aunt Jane and her husband came trailing along.

Aunt Jane was as tall as Mama, but thinner and, somehow, harder. She had a pump organ in her living room and she put on airs, such as serving ice tea with Sunday meals. Her husband, Uncle Otis, was a quiet little man who ran a Watkins route (Daily-Used Necessities for Home and Farm) in a battered A-model, which was the car they all came in. Aunt Jane had a boy about my age, named Henderson. He didn't come because there wasn't room in the car, which was all right with me.

Uncle Charlie was a bachelor. He looked more like Grandpaw Smith than the others, with the same lean look and proud head and eagle eye, except there was more laughter in his face.



The grown folks sat at the table, drinking coffee, polite and restrained, except for Aunt Jane who asked for a glass of water fresh from the well. Guess who had to fetch it.

Uncle Cliff put down his cup and said, "I reckon we might as well start." He hoisted the suitcase up on the table and opened it. The first thing he took out was the hogleg pistol. "Papa always said that he meant for Mr. Sword to have this." He laid the pistol in front of Daddy. Daddy didn't touch it, just gazed at the naked lady on one handle, and I'll swear tears were in his eyes.

"I'm not sure I want that gun in my house," Mama said.

Daddy picked up the gun. "He didn't pass it to you," he said. "He passed it to me."

Mama shut up. Uncle Cliff came up with the wedding portrait of Grandpaw and Grandmaw Smith. "He likewise said he meant for Jimmie to have this," he said. "Because she is the oldest."

Aunt Jane sniffed. Mama took the picture into her hand. "He was a handsome man," she said. "Mama was a handsome woman."

Uncle Cliff was bringing out the razor and shaving mug. He looked around apologetically. "He said I was to have his straight razor," he said. "And Charlie is to get the shaving mug."

Aunt Jane sniffed again. Uncle Cliff looked at her nervously. "He said you were to have his Mexican blanket." He took it from the suitcase and passed it to Aunt Jane. She didn't glance at it.

"Now, he didn't say anything about his clothes," Uncle Cliff said. "They're old, but well taken care of . . ."

Aunt Jane scraped her chair forward. "Otis can use them fine suits and shirts on his Watkins route," she said. "He's got an obligation to dress well. His customers expect it of him."

Mama looked at her younger sister. "They're not likely to fit him too good," she said. "Papa was a big man. They'd come closer to fitting Charlie."

"They can be cut down." Aunt Jane glared around the table. "If anybody wants to dispute it . . ."

"I wouldn't feel right, wearing my daddy's clothes," Uncle Charlie said hastily. "Otis is welcome to them."

Uncle Cliff put both hands on the money bag that was tied with

a rawhide lace. He looked from Mama to Aunt Jane to Uncle Charlie. "Papa told me first, last and always that it was to be divided share and share alike amongst the four of us. I hope nobody won't dispute it because he didn't write it down."

Mama cleared her throat. "He told me the same just the day he came," she said. "Boy there will tell you it was what he said."

They turned to look solemnly at me. I blushed and nodded.

Uncle Cliff untied the bag and spilled the money out on the table. It was a great heap, catching your breath just to see it. There were stacks of bills, ones and fives and tens and even a few twenties, all old and crumpled. Along with them were many coin dollars, great silver cartwheels. "I will call on Lee and Otis to count it," Uncle Cliff said. "If that is satisfactory to one and all."

Daddy and Uncle Otis started counting. After they were through, they conferred; then Daddy turned to the heirs. "First, there are four twenty-dollar gold pieces." He put one each in front of Uncle Cliff and Mama and Uncle Charlie and Aunt Jane. "Next, there is exactly one thousand eight hundred dollars in cartwheels and bills. Plus an Indian Head penny." He smiled. "I don't know what to do about that Indian Head. But the way I figure it, the rest comes to exactly four hundred and fifty dollars apiece. If all are agreeable, we will divide it that way."

All were agreeable. Daddy and Uncle Otis counted again. They pushed a pile of money in front of each heir or heiress.

Daddy held up the Indian Head penny. "Now what's to be done with this copper?" he said.

"Give it to one of the boys for a keepsake," Uncle Cliff said.

Mama looked at me. "Papa took a shine to Boy whilst he was here," she said. "I think he would favor Boy getting it."

Aunt Jane had just been waiting for favoritism to be shown. She bristled and lit in. Papa had always liked Henderson. In fact, you'd ought to have *heard* Papa brag on Henderson!

So here they were at it at last, hammer and tongs over a penny piece. Aunt Jane raged on and Mama chipped in with pieces of flint in her words that made the sparks fly. Old tales and old hurts and old malices got drug up, and I shriveled up inside, wishing

Mama would let old Henderson have that Indian Head penny.

In the end, Mama won on the authority of being the eldest daughter and me being her son and handed the penny to me. I didn't even look at it, not wanting it by now. But the Indian Head is a pretty penny, and I've got it to this day. It's an 1877, the rarest of all Indian Heads, and it has come to have a price at least half as much as all the rest of Grandpaw Smith's money.

The funeral visitors left soon after. First they had to talk themselves out of the bitternesses into a mood where they could mourn Grandpaw Smith again. The house seemed very empty after they left, as a house always does after death has taken place. It seemed an unnecessary burden to take up life where we had laid it down to do honor to Grandpaw Smith's passing.

Mama slept with the money under her pillow, just as Grandpaw Smith had done. I looked to see if Daddy did the same with the hogleg pistol, but he put it into the sewing-machine drawer.

At breakfast the next morning, Daddy said, "I feel uneasy, Jimmie. I'm just not used to keeping valuable money like that in the house. It looks to me like we either got to trust it to the bank or to the ground."

Mama stopped eating. "We are not going to bury our talents," she said. "I've already decided what to do with my money."

"You aim to spend it?" Daddy said in surprise.

"I aim to invest it," Mama said. "In case you ain't noticed, a milk truck passes here on its way to town every morning."

"You aim to buy milk?"

"I aim to sell it," Mama said. "I want you to go to the stock barn and buy me as many young milk cows as that money will stretch. The milk truck will furnish us two cans, and we can cool the milk in the mule trough at the well until he comes to pick it up. We will have cash money coming in every week of the world."

I looked at Daddy, knowing he'd be proud of Mama for having thought of it, because he'd always said she was a smart woman, and him a smart man for having had the nerve to marry her.

But Daddy was gazing down at his plate. "Pet, it ain't just that much of an easy thing to do," he said.

"What are you talking about?" Mama said. "If you don't know how to buy cows, I reckon I can do it myself."

"There ain't nothing to the buying," he said. "It's the pasture."

"Lee Sword, what are you sneaking up on?"

Daddy still didn't look at her. "Well, that pasture, it's for the all of us. If we had a cow or two we could keep them on it. But I doubt that Senator Clayton would take kindly to you going into business for yourself with a herd of cows on his pasture."

Mama rose up from her place. "You aim to set there and tell me that I ain't got the right to own all the cows I want to own?"

Daddy shook his head. "If everybody in Bugscuffle Bottoms had four or five head running on that pasture, they'd nibble the grass right down to the nub and starve to death. Can't one person do what all can't do. It's just about the smartest idea you ever had, Pet. Maybe we can manage it when we've found a place to ourselves where we don't have to consider other folkses' rights."

Mama's temper was coming up. "I'd like to hear Senator Clayton say something about my cows on his pasture grass."

Daddy stood up. "I will tell you now, Jimmie," he said sternly. "You shan't lead a cow into that barn until you've had the Senator's word that it's all right with him." Then he turned to me and John. "Let's get them mules caught out. It's time to hit the fields."

He didn't get out the door before Mama said, "Then I'll go see Senator Clayton, if you won't talk to him for me."

Daddy turned. "It ain't hardly my place. Me and the Senator have got an understanding. You'd better make your own understanding with him."

"Well, I'm not afraid," Mama said in a flaring voice.

Daddy left, and me and John got up to go with him. Mama's voice caught me. "Boy, you stay right here. I don't aim to hike across the high road all by my lonesome."

Mama cleaned up the house like it was afire, slamming and banging the dishes to show how disturbed she was. I figured I'd better just wait for her out on the front porch. I didn't have to wait long before she called me. She had an empty washtub standing in the middle of the floor.

"Tote me water till I tell you to stop," she said, and I knew she meant to take a bath.

I toted the tub half full, and enough for Mama to boil in the kettle to temper it with. Then I went outside and listened to her bathing like she was washing clothes with a soap paddle.

She called me again after she had dressed. "Get in that tub," she said. "Make it quick, now."

"I had me a bath before Grandpaw Smith's funeral," I said. "Besides, we're just going across the road . . ."

"Don't you back-talk me," Mama ordered. "I aim for him to know that we can be just as clean and high-and-mighty as his own self. Wash that head, too, while you're about it."

I stripped down and got into the tub. I bathed under Mama's keen eye, while she brushed out her hair, plaited it, and coiled the plaits around the crown of her head. I washed my head with the stinging-strong yellow soap and got out.

"Sunday clothes," she said.

I put on my Sunday pants and a clean shirt and then she called for my shoes. That was nearly too much, but I didn't feel like saying anything against it right at that time.

Mama put on her black straw hat, anchored it squarely with a huge hatpin. She wore her Sunday dress, a plain navy blue that she had made herself. She carried her big black patent-leather purse in one hand and her black parasol in the other.

We struck out for Senator Clayton's house like it was a trip halfway around the world. Mrs. Moats was at the well when we passed. "Good morning, Mrs. Moats," Mama said with dignity.

Mrs. Moats gazed at us in awestruck wonder. By the time we reached the gravel road, every woman in Bugscuffle Bottoms was standing in her doorway, watching us.

Mama crossed the road to Senator Clayton's entrance. She put her foot to the brick path that led to the front porch.

"I'll wait here," I said.

"You'll come on," she said without turning her head.

From across the road the house, with its wide veranda, blazed white in the sunlight, but standing so close you could tell that it

hadn't been painted since it should have. I wondered whether the Depression was giving Senator Clayton his troubles, too.

Mama went right on up those front steps. There was a knocker, a black lion's head, on the white door. She took it and let it fall. It thumped a lot louder than it needed to, it seemed to me.

The door was opened by Mrs. Senator Clayton. "Yes?" she said. She was a plump, kindly-looking woman, with blue eyes and a white skin and a million wrinkles to her face. In the memory of man she had never crossed the road into Bugscuffle Bottoms.

"I am Mrs. Lee Sword from across the road," Mama said. "I have come for a word with the Senator, if you don't mind."

Mrs. Senator Clayton took a minute to work her fluster out into a smile. "Why, I don't know exactly where he is," she said. "I'll send Maybelle to find him. Come in."

She stood aside to let us enter. We turned into a dusky-dark parlor with the curtains drawn, full of blue, stuffed furniture, two straight chairs with spindly legs, and on one wall a great mirror with a curlicued golden frame.

Mrs. Senator Clayton disappeared toward the back of the house. When she came back she said, "Oh, do sit down." She had a high, fluttery voice that sounded put on; yet her face was a bit puzzled. She wasn't used to callers from Bugscuffle Bottoms.

Mama took one of the straight chairs. She put her purse on the floor, but kept her parasol beside her, gripping the knob. Mrs. Senator Clayton perched on the sofa like a bird about to fly. I took the other straight chair. We all looked at each other.

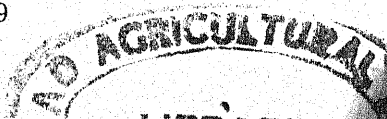
Senator Clayton hurried into the room, wiping his face with a handkerchief. "Why, Mrs. Sword," he said when he saw Mama.

She rose from her chair, looking tall and steady as a rock. "Senator Clayton, this ain't a social call," she said. "I have come on a matter of business."

"Why can't your man speak to me about it?" Senator Clayton said. His voice had taken on a tinge of sternness.

"It's my business, not Mr. Sword's," Mama said.

Mrs. Senator Clayton said gracefully, "I'm sure you'll want to speak to the Senator in privacy." She left the room.



"Sit down," Senator Clayton urged. "Now, what is it that's on your mind, Mrs. Sword?"

Mama sat on the chair, her back as straight as the parasol. "Senator Clayton, as you may know, my father died recently. . . ."

"I was sorry to hear about that," Senator Clayton said. "May I extend my heartfelt feelings in your days of bereavement?"

"Thank you, Senator. I appreciate your kind words. With the passing of my father, I have come into a small inheritance."

Senator Clayton relaxed enough to take a seat on the sofa. "Have you come to me for advice?" he said. "I'll be glad . . ."

Mama looked him straight in the face. "I know what I want to do with the money," she said, her voice hardening around the edges. "But my man tells me that even though we are renting land and pasture from you, I don't have the right to buy me a few head of milk cows with my own begotten inheritance."

Senator Clayton sat still. Mama watched him, like eyeing a snake coiled to strike.

"How many cows you planning on buying?" he asked.

"Three or four head." In spite of herself, urgency crept into Mama's voice. "That milk truck runs by here, and sending in every day to the plant, I'll have cash money . . ." She stopped.

Senator Clayton got up from the sofa, walked a pace or two, then came back to look down at Mama. "I was proud when you folks come to Bugscuffle Bottoms," he said. "I knew you were good, hard-working people who had fell on hard times. I wish I could count on everybody the way I can count on the Swords."

Mama's face was stiff and she didn't yield to the kind words because she knew he was hunting for a way to say her nay. "I thank you, Senator Clayton," she said formally. "I just need to know about them cows."

He paced a time or two. "If I let you run three or four head on that pasture, it's going to make everybody in Bugscuffle Bottoms as mad as a hornet," he said. "I've got a crop to get in, and get out. I can't afford to have fallings-out."

"Senator Clayton," Mama said. "With two growing boys I can't afford to keep my money in a sack. I see me a way to buy clothes

and school books, and shoes when the cold weather comes." She looked up at him. "It won't be but for the balance of the year. Then we'll be gone with our milk cows and all our troubles."

Senator Clayton smiled slightly, as though it hurt him. "You don't like Bugscuffle Bottoms, do you?"

Mama's lips tightened. "It might be all right for some. It just ain't my choice of a way to live."

"The land is good," Senator Clayton said. "You've got a good house and neighbors that run at least fair to middling."

Mama said, "I just don't like all the men working together."

"Don't you believe in folks helping each other out?"

"I believe in being neighborly," Mama said. "I don't believe in dependence on others." She stared directly at him. "That's why I didn't believe it when Lee Sword told me I had to depend on you to get me my own cows with my own money."

Senator Clayton sat down. "I've been pondering," he said. "Couldn't nobody hold it against us if we made us a business deal. You didn't come to ask for favors. You come to strike a bargain."

This new turn tightened Mama up; she could see some of her money flowing into Senator Clayton's already-full pockets.

"I've got that grass," Senator Clayton said. "You got the right to run one cow, maybe even two, for your household use. But if you aim to make money, then I got a right to share in it because I'll be furnishing your pasture."

Mama rose from her chair. She had a hating and a bitter voice. "You'll let me have my cows, with all the work and the care and the worry, just as long as you get the money that comes out of it."

Senator Clayton patted the air with one hand. "Now, Mrs. Sword, how much you figure a cow's pasturage is worth?"

Mama sat down slowly. She had begun to see a glimmer of light. "Well now," she said. "That's hard to say."

"I'd say two dollars a month per head is just about right."

"I'd say that's just about twice too high," Mama said. "I wouldn't pay out more than a dollar a head if my life depended on it."

Senator Clayton shook his head. "You're a hard bargainer, Mrs. Sword. You've got me cornered. A dollar a head it is."



"Wait a minute," Mama said. "Suppose there's a month when there ain't enough milk? Do I have to pay right on?"

"They'll be eating right on," Senator Clayton said.

Mama shook her head. "I've got to make money to be able to pay you. Say I got four head. I'll pay you the first four dollars them cows make every month. If they don't make it, then you don't get it, no more than I do."

Senator Clayton nodded. "That's fair." He stood up. "I'm mighty proud you came to me. I had all that grass just going to waste and now you've got me making money off of it. There's just one thing. Don't get upset if I brag about how bad I beat you in the bargain." He laughed. "But we know who got the best of it, don't we?"

Mama laughed too, stood up and shook his hand. "Senator, it's a pleasure to do business with you. If a body could like living in Bugscuffle Bottoms, it'd be because it's owned and run by you."

I tell you, it just flushed him up, it come so unexpected. He took out his handkerchief and dabbed at his forehead to get rid of his embarrassment. "Mrs. Sword, it wouldn't be fair to bring you all this long walk without some refreshment."

He went away and came back with Mrs. Senator Clayton. Maybelle Johnson brought a pitcher of lemonade and some cookies. We tried to make talk, but there was a considerable feeling of relief when Mama said, "Well, I reckon it's time we got home." To Mrs. Senator Clayton she said, "Now you come see us, hear?" and Mrs. Senator Clayton said, "Yes, we'll have to do that," and then we were going down the brick path.

"Mama," I said. "You got your cows."

She nodded. "Yes," she said. "I did, didn't I?"

"That Senator Clayton is a fine man," I said.

She bent me an unfathomable look. "I reckon he's like the rest of us. He does the best he can, and worries about it at night."

ON SATURDAY Daddy went to town and in the middle of the afternoon a truck pulled in and stopped at the well. Mama taken one look out of the window and was gone to see.

Daddy got down from the cab, a grin on his face. "Here's

your milk stock, Pet," he said. "I hope you'll like my choosings."

He and the truck driver took down the tail gate and walked the cows down the gangplank. Mama stood with her hands folded in her apron, watching them. The first one was a big, black muley cow, rangy-looking and with a small udder. Beside her was a big-bellied brown cow, with white markings on her face, that looked to have some Holstein in her. The third cow was a match for her, except smaller and leaner, and she sidled away when Mama tried to feel the bag.

"That one's the daughter of the half-Holstein," the driver said.

The fourth cow was a heifer with black-and-white splotches in her coat. "The heifer is freshened," Daddy said. "So is that big muley cow, though you can't tell it to look at her."

Mama prodded her side. She turned to the truck driver. "You guarantee me a calf from that cow?"

"Yes ma'am, I sure do," the truck driver said.

Mama walked around the cows once more. Bugsuffle Bottoms was heading our way by now, Mrs. Lollard waddling from her house, Mrs. Raincrow standing in the distance, kids running to see. Mama looked at me. "You got them named yet, Boy?"

"Yes'm," I said. "There's Muley and Fawn—because of her color. Fawn's daughter is Miss Shy. The heifer is Splotch."

"I'm supposed to go around calling her up from the pasture with a name like that?"

"Look at her coat," I said firmly. "It's splotched all over. You sure can't call her Spot."

Just then we heard Senator Clayton's A-model. He drove up behind the truck and got out. "Afternoon," he said affably to one and all. Then, to Mama, "I see you have got the cows we talked about." He went among them, inspecting carefully. He patted Miss Shy. "Well, Mrs. Sword, I guess you and me are going to make us some money. You can turn them into the pasture whenever you please." He got into his A-model and went away.

Mrs. Lollard said in a loud voice, "Humph! Some people come in here and act like they're God Almighty with a dollar."

Mama didn't pay her no mind. "John," she said, "water them

cows and put them in the barn lot." She turned to the truck driver. "If you'll come to the house I'll pay you your money."

In the house, she carefully counted out what was due. It took nearly every dollar she had. She handed the money to Daddy so he could make the payment, as the head of the house should do. Daddy gravely counted the money out to the man.

That night we all stood at the fence watching Mama milk her cows. She wanted to do it herself this first time. At supper she put a glass of milk at everybody's place but hers. I crumbled in a pone of corn bread and ate it with a spoon. Lord, it was good.

"Pet, you could have allowed yourself one glassful," Daddy said.

Mama sniffed. "I never could stand the stuff," she said. "Too white for me."

Morning and night, I milked Fawn and John milked Muley, while Mama took care of Miss Shy, and Splotch after she had freshened. Mama would strain the milk into the big milk can, one of two which the milk-truck man sold us, and me and John would take it to the mule trough and tie it down into the water so the milk would keep fresh all night. Next morning we'd cool the morning milk and add it to the can, and then I'd hitch Tony to the slide Daddy had made and pull the can to the gravel road where I'd leave it by the mailbox. The milk truck would come along early and pick it up and leave the other can.

Oh, it was a great day when the first milk check came in. Mama held it in her hands, just staring at it, and to see the look on her face would have put tears into the eyes of a wooden Indian.

It was an hour before she said, "I think that milk-truck man has shorted me. It ought to be more than that."

Daddy said, "Oh, I don't think he'd do that."

Mama finally decided that maybe the butterfat content wasn't as high as she'd thought it would be. She paid Senator Clayton out of the first check, leaving only a dollar for herself now, but the rest of the month was all her own.

The next week's check was smaller, too, than she had counted on. The week after she measured every drop that went into the can and so she *knew* it had come out short. "I'm going to town on

Saturday and talk to that milk-plant manager," she said grimly.

It was a good thing for that manager that on Saturday morning I happened to wake before daylight. I got up and went to the front porch and I stood staring for a minute. Then I tiptoed across the living room to shake Mama awake. "Mama," I said. "Mrs. Lollard is stealing milk from your milk can."

She came up out of that bed like it was full of rattlesnakes and hit the front porch on about the second jump. Mrs. Lollard was just leaving the well with a lard bucket in her hand.

"Lilybelle Lollard, you put that milk back," Mama yelled.

Mrs. Lollard stopped for an instant, then walked on just as though Mama wasn't steaming up behind.

Mama caught her arm and whirled her around. "Milk thief!" she panted. "Low-down, sorry, good-for-nothing milk thief! Put it back, I tell you." I'd never seen her so killing mad in my life.

Mrs. Lollard's face was sullen, caught. "Them that has ought to share with them that ain't," she said. "Besides, that pasture belongs to Lollards just as much as to Swords. I'm only taking our rightful share."

"Rightful share, my foot," Mama said. "You're stealing. You know I pay Senator Clayton for the pasture. Mrs. Lollard, put my milk back in my milk can. I don't aim to say it again."

Mrs. Lollard swung the bucket away from Mama's grabbing hand. "If I can't have it, you can't either." She poured the milk into the dirt at Mama's bare feet.

Mama stood stunned at the waste. Then she hit Mrs. Lollard with her doubled fist. Mrs. Lollard squalled and went over backward, hitting the ground with a thump. Mama leaned over her, hitting again, and Mrs. Lollard swung the empty bucket and caught Mama upside of the head. Mama went down and Mrs. Lollard sprawled on her, squalling and scratching like a wildcat.

I split for the house and shook Daddy awake. "Mama and Mrs. Lollard are fighting at the well. They're killing each other."

Daddy jumped into his overalls. At the front door he stopped. Mama was a big woman, but thin, and she was dwarfed by the great bulk of Mrs. Lollard. They stood leaning against each other,

Mrs. Lollard displaying a surprising vocabulary as she clawed at Mama's face and yanked her long hair. Mama was pounding Mrs. Lollard with her fists.

"Stop them," I screamed. "Stop them, Daddy."

Daddy remained prudently on the porch. "When womenfolk fight, a man better stay out of it," he said. "I don't think you have to worry about your mama, Boy."

Just then Mrs. Lollard started trying to get away. She'd scratch and claw and then she'd run a step or two. Every time Mama caught her, she'd beat her with her fists, until finally Mrs. Lollard laid down on the ground and let Mama hit on her fat back.

At last Mama straightened. "Lilybelle Lollard," she said, "I aim to sleep with the shotgun by my bed. You come to my milk can at the risk of your life." She stalked away from the battleground and marched by us with her face bleeding and her hair tangled. By the time we dared to follow, she was already in the kitchen, her face washed, slamming breakfast together.

"Pet," Daddy said. "I just stood there and admired." He grinned. "I'd have hated to take you on myself."

Mama sniffed. "When you associate with no-count people, they get you to acting in no-count ways," she said shortly.

That was all she ever had to say about her fistfight.

## CHAPTER VII

WE HAD settled into Bugscuffle Bottoms by now, had nudged our way into a place of our own amongst the people there. It had not been accomplished without strain and adjustment on both sides. Mama, high-headed and stubborn, knew acutely where she ended and the world began. She didn't want to intrude too far into the world and she sure didn't want the world to intrude on her.

She had made her choices. She welcomed Mrs. Raincrow into her house any day of the week, floors swept or not, and she would even visit Mrs. Raincrow, to talk a while and drink a cup of coffee. She thought the Lollards were dirty and low-down and not fit to

be associated with, even before they turned into milk thieves. She could tolerate Mrs. Moats but never paid her a visit. She was polite and respectful to the old age of Old Woman Roberts.

Daddy was different. Mama was suspicious of people, thought the worst of them, and so was frequently surprised. Daddy, on the other hand, liked people, thought the best he could of everybody, and was frequently disappointed. He was respected and looked up to. He could dose a mule handier than anybody because he knew how to gentle stock. He'd be called on to say his say about plowing and planting because the men knew that somebody who *thought* about things was talking.

We had come up in the world. Cash money coming in made all the difference. Most of the first week's money each month went to Senator Clayton; then the next three were ours. Mama bought new clothes for us and the material for two new dresses for herself. I went to sleep to the hum of the sewing machine going in the living room.

Of course, Mrs. Lollard saw to it that the commodity people heard about our cows and we got cut off from the relief. Mama was that much happier, not to be taking charity any longer.

These were the good days, and they got better. Senator Clayton found me at the well one day, watering Prince. He stopped the car and leaned out. "Soon as you get that mule back to the field, come to my barn," he said. "Got something to show you."

He was waiting in the passageway of the barn. He smiled and opened the stable door. I followed him, wondering. I stopped just inside the shadowy dimness of the stall because Bitsy, Senator Clayton's collie bitch, raised her head and growled a warning at me. I saw, then, that her straw bed was moiling with puppies.

"You can go on in," Senator Clayton said. "She won't bother you."

I knelt and put my hand on one of those puppies. It wriggled in warmth against my palm and Bitsy licked my hand, to let me know that she trusted me but that I belonged to be careful.

Bitsy wasn't the big collie with the long nose that most everybody knows. She was what they call a Scotch Border Collie, about

half the size of the other and a lot smarter and easier trained. She was a pretty dog, with a yellow coat and white ruff and black shadings on the tips of her ears.

I looked up at Senator Clayton. "Ain't they something?" I said. "I'm sure glad you let me come over to see them."

"Well, now, what I called you over here about," Senator Clayton said. "I've got more puppies than I know what to do with. So I figured I'd let you have the pick of the litter."

I rocked back on my heels, staring at Bitsy and her puppies because I didn't dare look up at the Senator. Daddy wasn't a hunting man, so we'd never kept dogs, and Mama couldn't stand a dog in the house anyway. Finally I stood up. "I'll have to ask at home," I said with what dignity I could muster.

"Why? Don't your mama hold with dogs?"

"We just ain't never had one, and I'm not sure she'd take to the idea."

"I tell you what you do," he said. "Pick out a pup and take him home. If she won't let you keep him, you can bring him back."

I yearned to give it a try. I had a dog hunger in me all of a sudden that just wouldn't wait. "Maybe I better ask her first."

"If you go and ask her, you know she'll say no," Senator Clayton said in a reasonable voice. "On the other hand, if you commit yourself, you might have a smidgin of a chance. Ain't that so?"

Right then I got an idea. "I think I'll try it," I said.

He studied me for a minute. "All right, pick your puppy."

There were nine puppies, five males and four females, and every one looked almighty desirable. But my idea required a female dog. I separated the four bitches. The choice was made when one grabbed a teat and hung on for dear life against the opposition of two brothers. I wanted a puppy that knew how to hang on. Bitsy whined when I took my choice out of the bed.

"Got your pick?" Senator Clayton said.

"Yes sir," I said. My puppy nuzzled her wet nose against my fingers. "I don't know how I'm going to go about thanking you. If there's any work you need done . . ."

He waved his hand. "You're doing me a favor, taking it off my

hands. Now you take care of that dog, you hear? It's a purebred, and could have papers if you wanted to fool with it."

I hadn't known that. A real purebred Scotch Border Collie! I went on away, my heart full of gratitude that I couldn't begin to put my tongue to.

When I reached the well, I put the puppy inside my shirt, figuring to put off the moment of telling Mama, but the maneuver didn't do me any good. I walked into the house; Mama taken one look at me and said, "What's that you've got in your shirt?"

I stopped dead still and said, "Senator Clayton wanted me to take a puppy off his hands."

"I guess that's a puppy you've got hid under your shirt, then."

"Yes'm," I admitted.

"Just take it right back," she said. "The day I want a dog in the house I'll make up my own mind, thank you."

I fetched out that idea I'd had. "I wouldn't have let him put the puppy off on me but for one thing," I said. "We need us a dog to handle those cows with." I unbuttoned my shirt and pulled out Foxy—her name had just popped into my mind, because of her sharp-pointed ears. "Foxy here is a purebred Scotch Border Collie. You don't even have to train them to handle cattle. They've got the instinct in their bones."

Mama poked her finger at the warm ball of fluff. "I hope my cows got sense enough to come home without any help," she said. She shook her head. "You know better than to bring a puppy in here without even a how-do-you-do beforehand."

"Not only that," I said in desperation. "I'll breed her and sell the puppies. No telling how much they'll bring."

"I don't notice Senator Clayton lining his pockets out of his litter," Mama said.

I stood baffled. I had figured on cow handling and pure profit to see me through.

"What do you figure on feeding a growing dog, anyway?" she said in what sounded mighty like a final voice. "You know it takes everything we can scrape to feed ourselves and the livestock."

I looked down at Foxy. I put my hand on the warm, round



little head, then I took it away. "I'll take her on back," I said.

She let me get as far as the door. Then she said, "I'll tell you one thing. If ever that Foxy dog of yours sets foot inside this house, I'll knock her sidwinding with the nearest thing I can pick up. I won't have no yard dog in my house."

It was hard meant, but it was giving in at the same time. I ran to her and put one arm around her waist.

"Oh, Mama, ain't she just the prettiest thing you ever did see?"

She put her hand under Foxy's chin to raise her head and look into her eyes. "I reckon she'll do," she said grudgingly.

Everybody envied me that dog: Mrs. Lollard went around talking about how she didn't notice Senator Clayton giving anybody else a fine pedigreed dog. I was afraid, knowing how mean she was, that Foxy would turn up poisoned one morning; but Foxy wouldn't take food except what I put out for her.

Foxy grew up to be the prettiest, smartest dog a boy could have. She ruffed out white and wide about the throat and chest and the rest of her coat was a deep honey yellow. Everywhere I went, Foxy was at my heel. You could send her to the depths of the pasture to find the cows and bring them to the barn. Then she'd stand in the open gate to hold them until you came. Or, if you told her, "Mules," she'd bring the mules. A great dog that didn't let me down but once in her whole life; and that's better than you can say about most people.

#### CHAPTER VIII

WE HAD come to the hardest season of all: hoeing cotton—monotonous, wearing, sweaty work. Daddy bought us each a straw hat and a brand-new hoe, and it was hit the field at daylight to work until dark, six days a week. It was doubly hard for Mama. She purely hated the business of putting everybody's work into a common pot and drawing it out again share and share alike. She couldn't believe that a day of work by Lilybelle Lollard measured up to one of her own.

The night before we started, she had a big fight about it with Daddy, and the next morning, when everybody was gathering at the well, Mama stalked by, her hoe over her shoulder, without even speaking a good-morning. By the time we had reached the field, she was half a row ahead. She stayed ahead all day, stretching her lead, hour by sweat-drenched hour, paying no attention to anybody else, not even stopping for a drink of water. By mid-morning she had lapped the slower workers and by noon she had caught up to the main body. She hoed right through us after dinner and when sundown came she had nearly lapped us all again. She put her hoe on her shoulder and marched home alone.

She followed that pattern day in and day out, determined to out-hoe man, woman and boy if it killed her. Daddy tried to remonstrate with her, but he didn't have much luck. It was her stubborn place that everybody has got, because if you didn't have that one place where you couldn't change you'd be a different person altogether. Like my stubborn place about names.

It's a law of the universe, and equally a law of man's soul, that where there's a rising up there's bound to be a falling off to follow. When the moon waxes, it must after wane; when the sun rises, it must also set. The Swords had had a time of waxing. Milk money coming in, new clothes, calves and pigs, even some newly hatched chickens Mrs. Raincrow had given Mama. Mama had ventured to talk about a place of our own, as a comfort, I guess, against the hard task she had set herself in the field.

"It wouldn't have to be a big place," she'd say. "Maybe a creek bottom somewhere, for the good land, with the house up on the side of a hill, and pine trees all around. Nobody living within a mile of us, at least. It would be nice to put our crop into our own ground next year."

Daddy would shake his head. "You've never given up to living here, have you?"

"I never will."

And then, right in the middle of the hoeing season, something went wrong with my knee joints. I couldn't bend them to save my life. It scared Mama and Daddy something awful. Mama

made me stay in bed for three days, but after that I got up because I wasn't sick. I could walk, as long as I swung my legs from the hips, though it hurt a lot when I did.

Every morning before she went to the field, Mama would install me on the porch. I'd sit on one chair with my legs propped up on another. She'd put a bucket of water within my reach and I'd have my book to read. Except for the pain, it was not a bad time because nearly everybody was gone down to the fields. You wouldn't think a fellow could get into bad trouble in the condition I was in, but I managed it.

To start off, Tom Lollard had come home. We hadn't even known about Tom. He'd been in reform school since he was fourteen years old and on his eighteenth birthday they had let him out to see how he would do. He didn't even pretend to work, but sat all day on the Lollards' front porch, picking the guitar. He was tall, well-built, with red lips in a clear-complexioned face, and blue eyes as innocent as the sky.

But I tell you, every boy in Bugscuffle Bottoms stepped uneasy in his vicinity. He wore an aura of penal places and hard doings. We'd all heard how reform schools were, in a rumorous sort of way. He had actually been to one; sent, his younger brother Harry told us proudly, for burgling grocery stores since he was eight years old.

Harry told us about the night Tom got caught. Tom had got into a grocery store, loaded up his sack, and had just opened the candy case to bring home some Baby Ruths, when the old man who owned the store raised up from behind a stack of flour bags with his shotgun and sung out to Tom to drop his sack and stand. Tom reached behind him to a case of Coca-Cola bottles and threw one at the old man, hitting him in the face. The shotgun went off, blowing pellets all over the store.

The old man's face was bleeding badly, but he came over that stack of flour like he was twenty years old and caught Tom as he bellied out the window. Tom kicked at him, but the old man pulled him back into the store and then, old and hurt as he was, he hand-whipped Tom Lollard until Tom was begging for mercy.

The next day, Harry said, The Law brought Tom home and Tom showed them where the money and canned goods from other burglaries were buried. Then he was took away and his family hadn't seen him again until just this week.

Tom wore a white shirt every day of the week, with the sleeves lapped halfway up his forearms, and sporty two-tone shoes with perforated wing tips. John started asking Mama for a pair of two-tone shoes, and on Sundays the boys would lap the sleeves of their white shirts halfway up to the elbow. Nevertheless, if there was a bunch of us at the well and Tom Lollard started sauntering down the path, everybody found business elsewhere. And it looked like those older boys had lost all interest in Fancy Sue.

I spoke to him once myself, which was more than most of the boys could say. It was after I'd got my stiff-kneed sickness, whatever it was. I just looked up from my chair, and there he was.

"They call you Boy, that right?" His voice was as light as a girl's, pleasant and true. "My name is Tom Lollard."

"Yes," I said. "I know that."

Suddenly he said, "Did you ever swap knives sight unseen?"

I knew about the game but I hadn't ever gone in for it. You'd hold out your swap knife in one hand, tight-closed over the other boy's hand, while he did the same. At the word, both parties would open their hands and let the knives drop. The object was to get a better knife than you let go, and for that reason you'd keep the rustiest, stump-bladedest knife you could find, in addition to your regular knife.

The only knife I had was the pearl-handled knife that Senator Clayton had given me and I sure didn't want to swap that one. But here I was, caught and didn't know how to get out of it. I could have said I didn't have a knife, but I never was very handy at lying. I figured Tom knew some pretty mean things to do to a fellow and, besides, he was eighteen years old.

He thrust his hand into his pants pocket, came out with it closed tight. "Swap!" he said. "Sight unseen. I dare you!"

There was nothing else for it. I pulled out my pearl-handled knife and when he said, "Swap," I watched it drop into his out-

stretched hand. The knife he had swapped me was so rusted you couldn't have got one of the blades open.

"It looks like I got the best of that trade," he said.

"Senator Clayton gave me that knife," I said, all choked up.

"Just like he gave you the dog," Tom Lollard said in a tight voice. "You're a pet of his, ain't you? You're a fool, too. You know that?" He flipped my pearl-handled knife in his hand, then held it out toward me. "Here. If the sheriff caught me even with a knife as small as that one, I'd be sent down yonder until I'm twenty-one years old. But you're going to know from now on that that knife is a present from me, not from Senator Clayton."

He was gone. I held my pearl-handled knife; it seemed twice as precious. But, if I had just known, I would have dropped it then and there.

Harry Lollard started it. He had treated me politely since our fight on the first day of school, though we didn't get along too well. But now that I was immobilized on the porch he'd parade back and forth, mimicking my lock-kneed walk and groaning. "Oh, Boy," he'd say. "Boy, oh, Boy. Baby Boy. Howdy, Boy. Good-by, Boy," and so on.

All I could do was grit my teeth and plot my revenge. I was pretty sneaky about it. When the pain finally began to go out of my legs and the joints began to limber up, I pretended there was no change, even to my family. If Daddy had known I could walk, I would have been hoeing cotton. Come the day when my knees were all right and, sure enough, about the middle of the morning, here comes Harry from the field to tote a keg of water.

"Hey, Boy," he hollered. "Old stiff-legged Boy."

He got to our picket fence and thumbed his nose at me. Then he started to parade, making a chant out of my name. I let him take two turns. Then I jumped up from the chairs, ran down the walk and reached the fence before he realized it. I sailed over and took a swing at him, with all my weight behind it. He went down and came up, scrambling and squalling.

He didn't try to fight me. He turned to run and I grabbed him, threw him down, and piled on top of him. I hammered a



good lick on the side of the head before he rolled away and up again. He took out down the path, blood streaming from his nose.

Tom Lollard was sitting on their front porch. When Harry came bawling and bleeding down the path, with me two jumps behind, Tom laid aside his guitar and stepped down. "You leave my brother alone," he yelled. "I'll stomp you into the ground."

Harry streaked past him into the safety of the house. I stopped ten feet short of Tom Lollard. I knew I was in for it now, because he was coming on me. That pretty mouth had thinned down and turned bloodless. His eyes had a white-balled, naked look. "I'm going to teach you to take out after a Lollard."

I should have been a coward and run. It didn't cross my mind. Instead, I took out that pearl-handled knife and opened the blade. "You come on me and I'll kill you," I heard myself saying. "I'll whittle you right down to the ground."

He stopped, then, and something inside me eased just a mite, thinking maybe I wouldn't have to do it. I stood there, holding the knife and feeling foolish. A weapon in the hand always makes you feel foolish when you can stop to think about it. It don't enlarge a man at all, it diminishes him.

In that moment of relaxation, he reached for me and I slashed, quick as a snake striking. I got him from the shoulder to the wrist along the outside of his arm and as the knife peeled the flesh the blood followed like a deadly little river. A bemused expression came on his face, as if he didn't believe that it was his arm or his blood. Then he reached for me with the other hand.

I slashed again. This time I got him across the forearm, a deeper and raggeder cut, and I could see the bright red splashes of blood on his white shirt. Then I went crazy. Tom turned to run and I went after him, chopping at his back. I would have killed him, I reckon, if he hadn't been six years older and faster on his feet. He was three steps ahead of me when he hit the front porch and the blood from his arms was flying in my face. I had tattered his shirt in the back, but I hadn't hit flesh.

At the doorstep I turned away. I couldn't pursue him into his own house and finish slicing him into little bitty pieces, which is

what I had in my red mind. Toting the knife open in my hand I got to the front door of my house. It was all I could do to crawl inside and collapse on top of the bed.

I was lying still, sick to my soul, when Daddy got there. Harry had run to the fields, yelling that I'd killed Tom. Everybody had come streaming, but nobody had reached the settlement before Daddy did. He came and sat on the bed. "Why did you do it?"

"I had to," I said. "He come on me."

"Couldn't you have run?"

"I reckon not," I said.

His face was ten years older than when I had last seen it. I buried my eyes in the circle of my arm. I was sick through every cell. The anger, the wanting-to-kill, had ebbed away and left nothing behind but a pervasive illness of the soul.

Daddy must have understood. He went out and I heard loud, angry voices. Then Senator Clayton's voice came in smooth and heavy and the other voices hushed. I heard somebody else in the room, but I couldn't turn over. I thought it was Mama and I didn't plan to look her in the face for the rest of my life.

It was Senator Clayton. "I reckon you better hand me that knife, Boy." His voice was stern, but no sterner than his face. I relinquished the knife into his hand. There was blood smeared on the pretty pearl handles, turned darker already.

"I'm disappointed in you," he said before he went away.

"Yes sir," I said. "I reckon I'm disappointed in myself."

It was a long time before my next visitor. This time it was John. Just about anybody would have said something. But if John knows any one thing in this world, it's the value of silence. He sat for the longest and didn't open his mouth. When he got up to leave he didn't try to cap off his comforting silence by well-chosen words, and that was just right, too.

I don't know whether anybody else ate dinner at noon or not. No one came to me and throughout the long afternoon I lay on the bed while my family moved about in the living room, talking in low voices as though I were dead. It was getting dusky dark when Mama came into the room for the first time.



*The Least One*

She stood in the doorway and said, "You want some supper?"

I let silence be my answer.

"You wouldn't have done any such a thing, living anywhere but in Bugscuffle Bottoms," she said. Then she went away.

I must have slept that night, and I remember the gray dawn of a new day. Later, Daddy came in and told me that Senator Clayton was going to hold Justice of the Peace court and settle things. I knew what was in store for me. Reform school, like Tom Lollard. I was twelve—they'd keep me until I was eighteen.

Mama came in at noon to try to feed me, but I wouldn't eat. By the middle of the afternoon I was beginning to get light-headed, so that I thought crazy floating thoughts, all red and black, streaming into a tight, round, spinning ball, unraveling out into nothingness and then starting to spin again in the other direction.

At night Mama came to me with a bowl of soup. I swallowed the first spoonful. The second gagged me. Mama tried to get me to take more but my teeth were clenched and she couldn't open them with the spoon. She persuaded me to take off my clothes and get into the bed instead of lying on top of the covers.

I woke up in the morning, weak but whole. The sickness had ebbed into a tight little whorled corner of its own where it has stayed to this day. Most of the time, of course, I'm not even aware that it's there. But it is. It is.

For breakfast I ate half a biscuit. I even managed to sit at the table to do it. "I'll tell Senator Clayton he can hold his court today," Daddy told me. "No sense in putting it off."

They waited for the day's work to be done to hold the Justice of the Peace court. Not a soul from Bugscuffle Bottoms was missing when Senator Clayton arrived at the artesian well. I stood with Mama and Daddy and John. Tom Lollard stood with his family. His arms were wrapped in bandages. He wore the shirt he'd fought the fight in, dirty and bloody and tattered.

Senator Clayton took his seat on the mule trough. "As Justice of the Peace, I am empowered to hold court and mete out punishment. I'll listen to the evidence and then I'll give my judgment. Now, there ain't nobody on trial here; I mean any specific per-

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son. It's a hearing, and I want the truth, and then I'll decide."

Mrs. Lollard stepped forward. She was so mad she was shaking all over her fat frame. "You mean to say that murdering boy is not on trial? What's a Justice of the Peace court for?"

Senator Clayton gazed sternly at her. "What I mean to say, they're both on trial," he said. "The purpose of this hearing is to determine who was at fault." He turned to Harry Lollard. "It started with you, so you'll testify first."

Harry Lollard stepped forward, looking important.

"Raise your right hand," Senator Clayton told him. "Do you swear to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, so help you God?"

He may have sworn it, but he sure didn't pay much attention to it. To hear him tell it, he had been passing my house, minding his own business, when I had jumped the fence in a fury of murderous rage and beaten him to a pulp, until he had got away and run to his own house, me chasing him with my knife. When Tom Lollard set out to defend his little brother's life, I had cussed and dared Tom down into the yard, swearing I would kill him, whereupon I had set out to do the same.

Harry finished. Senator Clayton sat watching him with steel eyeballs for a minute or two. Harry fidgeted and squirmed, turned red in the face, and couldn't look at anything but his bare toes, dirty on the ground.

"You say you didn't do anything to provoke him?" Senator Clayton said.

"Yes sir, that's what I said," Harry said in a low voice.

"All right. Go back over there."

Harry merged with his family. Mrs. Lollard smiled at him and said, "You done good. Told the truth and shamed the devil."

Senator Clayton was looking at me. "Boy Sword, come forward."

I came forward, raising my hand for the swearing.

"Tell your side of it," Senator Clayton said.

My voice was shaky, but I managed to tell it all, how Harry had tormented me all the days my knees were stiff and how I'd concealed the fact that I was well and laid for him to do it

*The Least One*

again. Then I had jumped the fence and hit him pretty good and chased him home. Then I told how Tom Lollard had come off the porch and what he had said. There I faltered.

"Go on," Senator Clayton said.

I took a hard gulp and told it down to the last detail. Senator Clayton kept his stern eyes on my face until the end.

"You meant to kill him if you could, then," he said.

I looked at Senator Clayton, that fine man who had thought enough of me to give me that pearl-handled knife and my Foxy dog. "I can't deny it," I said.

"Do you wish you could deny it?"

"Yes sir," I said, and then my throat choked up.

"All right. Go back to your family."

Daddy put his hand on my shoulder, but I stood away. Once you're old enough to set out to kill a man you can't afford to cry.

"Tom Lollard," Senator Clayton said.

Tom stepped forward and raised his bandaged right arm. He listened to the swearing and said he would and then Senator Clayton told him to tell his story.

"I was setting on the porch and saw him chasing my brother and it made me mad. So I jumped off the porch aiming to slap his head off and he cut me." His voice was indifferent, as though he were talking about something that had happened to somebody else.

Senator Clayton waited. "Is that all you've got to say?"

Tom Lollard shrugged.

"It didn't happen to occur to you that you're eighteen years old and a man grown?"

Tom Lollard still didn't answer. Senator Clayton sat waiting until there was a stir among the watching people. "Do you plan on answering me?"

"I just aimed to slap his head off," Tom said. "I told you that."

"Sir!" Senator Clayton said. "I'm sitting as a Justice of the Peace, and I expect to be addressed as Sir."

Tom Lollard stood mute.

Senator Clayton rose up from his seat on the mule trough and walked away down the path toward the fields. In the silence was

the pure sound of running water. The sun was down in a still evening and high up over our heads I heard the single drumbeat of a bullbat as he pulled out of a swooping dive. That sound has carried a lonely and fearful feeling for me ever since. Darkness crept out of the east, hastening a discreet distance behind the going light of the sun. The upper air held a luminosity still, as though somewhere distant a bright city cast its glow skyward.

Senator Clayton stood alone, looking through the bars of the pasture gate. Then he came back and took his place. "From what I can sort out between the truth and the lies," he said, "Harry Lollard laid up a retribution for himself and Boy Sword was almighty anxious to mete it out. In the midst of meting, he run up against a lot more than he expected to handle. So he picked the poorest way to handle it that he could think of. He set out, a twelve-year-old boy, to kill him a man."

I could feel my backbone shriveling because Senator Clayton had me pinned with his eyes as he spoke the words.

"Howsomever," Senator Clayton went on. "An eighteen-year-old man ought to know better than to fight a twelve-year-old boy. So I am forced to make the judgment that Boy Sword, since he did not show a knife until he was attacked by superior force, was acting in justified self-defense. And I'll tell him right now, if he shows knife blade in Bugscuffle Bottoms one more time, regardless of the provocation, he's going to reform school just as fast as I can send him there. You hear me, Boy?"

"Yes sir," I said, mumbling the words. Only then did I realize that nothing was going to happen to me.

Tom Lollard stood alone with the last of the light on his handsome face. Senator Clayton turned to him, his voice dead serious and slow moving. "Tom Lollard, you were let out of reform school because your daddy asked me to sign papers. I signed those papers and you were let loose into my charge before your time was done. Do you understand what I've got to do now?"

Another long silence. "I've got to go to town tomorrow and report what happened," Senator Clayton said. "I'll do what I can for you. I will explain the circumstances. I will tell the man I am

still standing behind you." He paused. "It would improve my position considerably, Tom, if I knew you were in the fields with your family, instead of setting on your front porch strumming on your guitar and waiting for trouble to happen along."

It was over then. Daddy and Mr. Lollard talked to each other in low voices, then talked to Senator Clayton, and I heard Daddy telling the Senator that, if it would help any, Senator Clayton could add Daddy's word to his own in support of Tom, since it was Daddy's boy Tom had got into trouble with.

That night, without waiting to see what Senator Clayton could do in his behalf, Tom Lollard left between the dark and the daylight and a month later he was caught breaking into a grocery store in Memphis, Tennessee. He was sent to jail there, and I have never laid eyes on him again.

#### CHAPTER IX

THE BAD thing I did echoed on. What happened to Daddy could be laid to my account, too, because if I hadn't still been shaky Daddy wouldn't have been doing my job, the very next night, of toting in the stovewood. After he piled it in the box behind the stove, he came to the table, sat down and poured out a glass of buttermilk.

Suddenly, he sprang to his feet, throwing his chair over backward, and frantically began unfastening his overall straps.

"Lee, what in the world . . ." Mama said.

He didn't answer. He tore down the overalls, his face gray as graveyard stone. He looked at his bare legs and in the lamplight we could see the two sets of punctures, reddened in the whiteness of his thighs. He stripped the overalls inside out and laid them on the table. We all saw what he saw.

He looked at Mama and said hoarsely, "I've been bit by a black widow spider. She climbed into my britches and got me."

The spider was nested inside of Daddy's overalls and crouched, shining black, as though hoping for another chance at him.

Daddy picked up a case knife by the blade and with the handle carefully crushed the spider.

"Death do come in small doses, don't it?" he said. "A man don't figure to die this way."

Mama was out of her chair in a surge of violent movement. "Does it hurt now?"

Daddy shook his head. "Numb, that's all. But I feel her poison in me." He sat down, as though his legs were giving way.

Mama began to move then and I don't think she stopped for the rest of the night. "John, go to the Raincrows' and ask Odell to take you to town for the doctor. Don't come back without him, either. Boy, go with him, and tell me when they've left."

"Yes ma'am," John said. "I'm gone."

As I went after John, I heard Daddy saying, "It's beginning to hurt. It's coming to me now."

I had to run as hard as I could to catch up with John. He knocked on the Raincrows' door. Mrs. Raincrow came at the first sound—later she said it sounded like a death knock the minute it came. Odell stood behind her.

"Odell, take me to town," John said. "I got to get a doctor. Daddy got bit by a black widow spider."

"Can't," Odell said. "I got the motor tore down."

John turned and bumped into me. "There's Senator Clayton," I said.

"I'd better go help what I can," Mrs. Raincrow said.

John had already started across the gravel road. At Senator Clayton's gate, he stopped. "You ask him," he said.

I banged on the door knocker and Senator Clayton came to the door. He had on slippers, his coat off, a newspaper in his hand. "What is it, Boy?" he said.

"Daddy," I said. "He got bit by a black widow spider. We need the doctor real bad."

He didn't even stop to put on his shoes and coat. He and John got into the A-model. Then they were gone.

I went back across the road, stopping at the well for a drink of water. Daddy's going to die, I told myself, saying it slow and

careful so there wouldn't be any way to dodge the meaning of the words. If I hadn't been in the knife fight and made my soul sick I'd have been carrying the stovewood.

Bad news spreads. Mr. Moats came hurrying, followed by Old Man Roberts. Big Johnson came, a huge black shadow in the darkness, and then Mr. Raincrow. They sat on the front steps.

"If your mama needs some man-help in there, you just holler," Mr. Moats told me.

"Yes sir," I said. I went into the house. Daddy was on the bed, no more than half conscious. I could hear his breath laboring in the room's stillness. He'd lay quiet a minute and then he would writhe the entire length of his body, bringing out a groan from the very roots of his being.

Mrs. Raincrow was wiping his face with a wet rag. Mama stood with her hand on the rigidity of his stomach muscles, breathing with him, hurting with him. She didn't take her eyes from his gray, sweating face when she heard me enter.

"They've gone to get him," I said. "John and Senator Clayton."

Daddy writhed, groaned. The muscles were fluttering in his legs like tiny heartbeats, each tremor independent of the others.

"You oughtn't to see this," Mama said. "It's not for your eyes."

"Don't send me out there with the men," I said.

She looked at me. "Heat me a dishpan full of water. If we don't do something, he'll go into convulsions."

I hurried into the kitchen, chunked up the fire, and poured water from the bucket into the dishpan. When the water began to roil along the sides of the pan, I lifted it from the stove and staggered into the living room.

Daddy was beginning to jerk now, from the legs up, and he'd keep on jerking until his whole body was moving. The bed was soaked with his sweat. The muscles of his stomach under Mama's hand were as rigid as a two-by-four.

"I got the water," I told Mama.

"Set it on the floor," she said. "And get me towels. Hurry."

"Run to my house," Mrs. Raincrow said. "Tell Mattie to send all the clean towels she can find."



I hurried to bring our towels. Mama dipped and wrung them, then placed them on Daddy. When she had them all over him, she took off the first one to dip it anew in the hot water.

I went to the porch. "They want towels," I said. The men didn't say a word, just got up and left and in minutes they had returned. I carried the God's plenty of towels to Mama and went back to the kitchen. I set the water bucket directly on the stove and when the water was heated I took it into the living room.

"It's helping," Mama said. "I wish that doctor would get here." She began massaging Daddy's legs and stomach through a hot towel, her strong hands gripping and rubbing over and over and over again until I thought they'd fall off from fatigue.

The room was quiet. Mrs. Moats arrived and took over the job of keeping the hot water coming. Old Woman Roberts sat near the foot of the bed, as though death couldn't come if she watched sharply enough. Only Mrs. Lollard was missing.

Once Mama looked up toward Daddy's face. "He's getting paralyzed." She had always had life in her eyes, sharp and bright, eyes filled with laughter, or anger, or even tears. They were empty now. It scared me worse than anything in my life.

Finally they came. The men stirred on the porch and then I heard Senator Clayton's A-model, behind it the sound of a heavier, more powerful car.

The doctor came alone into the living room. I saw John's face at the door, his imploring eyes asking me the news. I didn't know whether to shake my head or nod it. I just looked at him. Then the door shut him outside with the men.

The doctor was a sparrowlike little man, his head fragile-looking and thin-boned as a chicken's. He took off his coat, folded back his sleeves, studied Daddy, glanced around the room. "Get these women out of here," he said.

The women left reluctantly. Mama stayed, of course. I was standing against the wall, hoping he wouldn't notice me.

The doctor felt Daddy's pulse, while Mama stood watching, every line of her body tense. He took out his stethoscope, listened to the chest, then fumbled in his bag for a hypodermic needle.

He tediously fitted it together and said to Mama, "Boil this good."

Mama took it to the kitchen, came back. "What are you going to do to him?" she said.

He glanced at her, birdlike. "About all I can do. Shoot him full of morphine. Got to stop the pain if we can."

"I didn't know what to do," Mama said. "We sponged him with warm towels when it looked like he was going into convulsions."

The doctor nodded. "Best thing," he said.

Mama brought a stewer of boiling water from the kitchen. The doctor plucked out the needle. He reached into his bag for a small bottle, filled the needle with a deft movement. As he lifted it against the lamplight, squirting a spray of the stuff out through the tip, he said, "What's that boy doing in here?"

Mama turned toward me and I knew I'd better go. As I went, I saw the doctor leaning over Daddy, needle in one hand.

The men and women sat on the porch. Nobody said anything when I came out. John was sitting alone at the end of the porch. I sat down beside him and whispered, "What took so long?"

"He didn't want to come," John said. "Said it was too far, he had a woman having a baby later on tonight."

"What made him change his mind?" I whispered.

"Senator Clayton. He said one of his best men was like to die and he was already shorthanded this year. So he came."

I looked at Senator Clayton, in his central place amongst the men, and hated him for putting it that way. It was the first time I'd ever found a dislike in me for that fine man.

Soon the doctor came to the door, bag in his hand.

"How is he, Dr. Gregory?" Senator Clayton asked.

"There isn't much I can do, except ease the pain and wait to see how much strength he's got to fight the poison with."

"He's a strong and healthy man," Senator Clayton said.

"That's all to his favor," Dr. Gregory said. "I'll be back first thing in the morning." He went to his car and drove away.

Senator Clayton took a deep sigh. "I reckon he done what he could. Now it's up to God and to nature." He turned to the men. "Tomorrow's a working day. You can't do any good here."

Mrs. Raincrow stood. "I'll set up," she said.

"I'll keep her company," Mrs. Moats said. They went inside.

"You reckon he'll die?" I asked John when we were alone.

John's voice sounded surprised. "He can't die," he said.

That seemed to cover the subject. I felt suddenly worn out and was glad when Mrs. Raincrow came and told us to go to bed. Daddy was lying quiet, covered with a quilt. Mama sat at the head of the bed, hands folded in her lap. Mrs. Moats and Mrs. Raincrow, too, were sitting with a monumental patience that would outlast the night, and death itself.

Mama looked toward us. "Go to bed now," she said. "You'll both be needed in the morning."

I think I was asleep the minute my head touched the pillow. I woke up just before daylight, wondering what was wrong. It took a minute to flood back. I shucked into my overalls and shirt and opened the door quietly into the living room.

Mrs. Moats and Mrs. Raincrow were asleep in their chairs. Mama was sitting as I had left her. She put her finger to her lips and I tiptoed across the room to look at Daddy. There was a gray tiredness in his face, but he was sleeping.

"He woke up about four o'clock, and knew me," Mama whispered. "He's beat out the poison."

At the sound of her voice, Daddy opened his eyes with a great effort. "I'm as weak as a litter of kittens," he said.

"Don't try to talk, Lee," Mama said. She held the dipper for him to drink, putting her hand under his head. Then he fell back, panting, his eyes closed again.

"Boy," he said in a wispy voice. "Your name . . ."

I leaned forward tensely.

"Don't fret yourself, Lee," Mama said. "Just lie easy."

I wished she'd shut up. She ought to know what it meant. He had gone down into the valley of the shadow and he had fetched back his own soul. If he had fetched a name for me as well, I needed to hear it.

"But his name . . ." Daddy said.

"You're disturbing him," Mama said to me. "Go on now and



wake John. It'll soon be time to milk the cows and feed the stock."

For the beat of a second I waited, looking desperately toward Daddy. But he had subsided, his head fallen to one side as though he'd worn out all available strength.

I left. In a little while I shook John awake. "Come on," I said. "We got to tend the livestock."

Outside, the air was cool and gray. Tony pawed at his stable door to let me know he was ready for breakfast. The cows were sleeping in one corner of the lot. I thumped old Muley in the side with my foot. "Get up," I said. "I can't milk you laying down."

Groaning, she got to her feet. I started milking, drumming the streams against the bottom of the lard bucket, the sound changing, muffling, becoming more musical as the bucket filled.

Before I finished Muley, John was in the lot, milking like a demon. "Daddy looks a lot better," he said over his shoulder.

"I know that," I said crossly. "I was up before you were."

We finished milking. Mama came to the kitchen door and called us to save out a bucketful because Daddy would need milk to get back his strength. She stood in the doorway while I brought it. "What's the matter with you?" she said.

"Nothing," I said. I wanted to ask why she wouldn't let Daddy tell me the name he had brought back for me, and maybe it showed on my face. But I couldn't ask. I knew how selfish it was to be thinking of such a thing at such a time.

I fed Tony last. He poked at me with his nose, full of sympathy and understanding; he could tell I was upset. I put my arms around his strong-arched neck. "Suppose you were a no-name mule, like I'm a no-name boy?" I said. "You wouldn't like it either."

When I went into the house, the doctor was there, going over Daddy with his stethoscope. "Well, Mr. Sword, you're over the worst of it," he said. "But you got a row to hoe ahead of you yet."

"I got a crop in the ground," Daddy said weakly. "It's the first crop I've had in a long time, Doctor."

"Then your wife and boys will have to tend to it," Dr. Gregory said. "You'll be in this bed two to three weeks at best."

"What's the treatment, Doctor?" Mama said.

*The Least One*

"Good food, and bed rest. And time. That's what it'll take the most of." Dr. Gregory closed his bag and stood up. "I wonder if I could bother you for a good country breakfast, Mrs. Sword? I haven't had a wink of sleep all night."

Mama looked flustered. "Why, of course, Doctor," she said. In the kitchen she whispered to me, "You tuck around to Mrs. Raincrow's and ask her to let you have two eggs. And a slice or two off her slab of bacon if she can spare it. Hurry now."

I nipped out the kitchen door and around to Mrs. Raincrow's. She understood right away. The chickens she'd set for Mama weren't yet up to laying eggs. Our usual breakfast was biscuit and thickening gravy and coffee. You couldn't set that kind of country breakfast in front of an honored guest like a doctor.

Mrs. Raincrow cut slices off the thick slab of home-cured bacon. "There's two extra eggs for Mr. Sword," she said. "You tell your mama to soft-boil them . . . but she'll know. Hurry, now."

When I came in the kitchen door Mama had the skillet hotting up. "She sent two eggs for Daddy, too," I said.

"She's a thoughtful woman," Mama said. "Now you go in there and inquire of the doctor how he'd like his eggs."

I did as I was told. The doctor looked pleased. "Just over light," he said. "With a slice or two of bacon if you've got it."

When it was ready Mama called him to the table and stood back proudly. My mouth was watering.

"Why, that's the finest breakfast I've had in a month of Sundays," the doctor said. "You country people eat good."

I left the kitchen. I didn't think I could stand to watch him eat those two eggs and that bacon. I went to the well, where the men were already gathering for the day's work.

"How's your daddy?" Mr. Moats asked.

I told them what the doctor had said.

"Well, it looks like it's up to us to hoe out Mr. Sword's crop for him," Mr. Raincrow said. "We won't count the days against him until he's on his feet again. All right?"

Everybody nodded their agreement. That made me feel better, because with just me and John in the fields we'd get far behind.

The doctor came out and Mama called me. John was already at the table eating a biscuit covered with thickening gravy. After we were through with our breakfast, Mama told us that Daddy wanted to talk to us. We went in and stood beside the bed.

He smiled weakly at us. "It'll be up to you two to keep things going," he said. "If we don't make the crop now we won't make it. So you've got to tend to it. Think you can do that?"

"Yes sir," John said.

"You don't have to worry your head none," I said. "The men say they'll hoe out the crop for us and not count the days."

"That's mighty nice of them," Daddy said. He closed his eyes. "I'm tired now, like I already put in a full day." He was pale and drawn; he had lost weight during the long night.

We got to the field and I knew it was going to be a hard day. But I didn't know how hard, nor how many days. Daddy lay abed for two weeks, seeming not to recover at all. Then he was on his feet part of the time for another week. All during the busiest season of the year, we had to hoe the cotton and plow it, and hoe it and plow it again, every day, six days a week. In addition, there was the night work and the morning work and the cows to take care of and the milk to be got off on the milk truck.

Mama took care of Daddy and, after he was better, she'd come to the fields and work when she could, visiting the house every hour. Daddy, still weak, with his legs apt to give out on him without warning, took to sitting on the front porch, reading the Bible.

All this time I never got a chance at him. But one day Mama, instead of going herself, told me to run to the house, see how Daddy was doing, and bring back a keg of fresh water.

Daddy was on the porch, Foxy lying by his chair.

"There's something I've been meaning to ask you," I said as easy as I could. "The morning after that first night, when you woke up, you started to say a name for me. What was it?"

Daddy stared at me, frowning. "I don't remember that."

I began to feel desperate. "You said, 'Boy, your name . . .' Then Mama wouldn't let you talk. Daddy, I need to know that name you got for me."

## *The Least One*

Daddy shook his head. "I'm sorry, Boy. If I had it, it come out of the fever and when that went the name went with it."

I knew it was no use. I was only fretting him. "I got to get back," I said. "They need the water."

I filled the cedar keg at the well and started back to the fields. I hadn't got far when I heard Senator Clayton's A-model coming down the lane behind me.

"Get in," he said, stopping. "I'll ride you the rest of the way."

It was the first time I'd ever got to ride in the A-model. I got in and he started on. "How's your daddy doing?" he asked.

"He can't seem to get his strength back," I said. "Other than that, he ain't bad."

Senator Clayton nodded. "I'd rather get bit by a snake any day of the world. Except a water moccasin."

We reached the field and I started to get out.

"Wait a minute," he said. "What's the matter with you, anyway? You've been going around like a sore-tailed cat."

Senator Clayton owned our world. I liked him. I knew he liked me. But right at that moment I didn't feel very respectful. I said, hard and bitter, "How come you told the doctor you were short-handed and couldn't afford to lose one of your best men?"

He sat still for a minute, surprised by my onslaught. "To persuade him to come," he said. "It seemed the best thing to say."

"It's no way to talk about a man," I said.

"I think well of your daddy," he said. "I've thought well of you, too, up to now. You didn't strike me as the kind of boy to go around sassing your elders. Didn't your daddy raise you to speak polite, saying yes sir and no sir?"

"He did," I said, stubbornly avoiding the yes sir. "What I wonder is, when does the time come for a body to speak his mind like a man among men?"

"I reckon it comes when you make up your mind to act like a man instead of a child," he said quietly.

"Yes sir," I said. I had used the two words, but not in any way that he would like to hear.

I had one foot on the ground and was reaching back for the



water keg when he said, "When you graduate from high school, have you planned on going to college?"

"I ain't thought on it any," I said.

"Get in and sit down," he said. "I want to talk to you."

"Don't you figure them people are thirsty?" I said.

"What I've got to say is more important than that," he said. "Get in." I got into the car. "You can be as mean as a yard dog, can't you?" he said. "Why don't you put that hard mind of yours to bettering yourself? It would be a pure waste if you didn't carry your education as far as you possibly can."

"I don't even know anybody who went to college," I said.

"I'm a college graduate," he said.

I couldn't help but look at him then. In that minute he shot up by about fourteen feet. "I didn't know that," I said.

"I started out as a schoolteacher. I only came back to Bugscuffle Bottoms when my father needed somebody to run the place."

"I wish I had you to teach me," I said then. "Some of these teachers don't seem to know much more than I do."

"That's a pretty prideful statement," he said.

"Before school let out, Mrs. Lovelady was telling about anthracite being soft coal and bituminous being hard," I said. "I told her it was the other way around. She argued about it, so I brought out the dictionary. She turned mad and claimed that the *dictionary* was wrong."

"You went about correcting her the wrong way," he said. "You stepped out of your place as a pupil and attacked her as a teacher. You'll understand when you're a teacher yourself."

"You think I might make a teacher?"

"If you want it hard enough."

Lord, it took my breath away, just for a shining minute. Then I looked out across the fields and there was Mama, hoeing away half a length ahead of everybody else as usual, John working hard, too, everybody working but me and Senator Clayton and I hadn't brought them their water till yet. I shook my head. "You oughtn't to dangle such doings to tempt me," I said.

He studied his hands on the wheel. "The day you graduate

from high school, come to me. On that day, it'll be more than talk about college. Wherever you are, you come to me if you can't see your way clear by yourself. Will you promise to do that?"

"Yes sir," I said, and for the first time I owned some humility to put into my words.

DADDY came slowly on the mend, and one day he took to the fields with the rest of us. Having him at work again filled an aching void that I hadn't even realized was there. I stayed close all the long morning.

Until about eleven o'clock. The sun was blasting hot out of a blue sky with just a float of thunderheads along the horizon. At the end of the row I looked back. Daddy was sitting, his head between his knees, his elbows propped, his hands hanging.

I yelled, "Mama!" and started for him. Mama reached him by the time I did. "Lee," she said. "What's the matter?"

He tried to lift his head. His face was ashy and sweat stood out in great beads. His body was trembling like he had the ague.

Mama knelt, stretched him out on the ground. Turning her back, she stripped off her petticoat from under her dress. "Get me the water keg," she told me.

I brought it on the run. She wadded the cotton petticoat, wet it and wiped his face, then put it on his forehead.

"He come to the fields too soon," Mr. Raincrow said from the group standing round.

"Somebody bring a wagon to get him home," Mama said.

Mr. Moats started on a dead run.

By the time the wagon came Daddy was feeling better. With Mr. Raincrow and Mr. Moats supporting him on each side, he walked to the wagon and they went off, Daddy riding on the tail gate, Mama walking along behind.

Next morning he insisted on returning to the fields. He made the morning, all right, but about two o'clock in the afternoon it hit him again. He recognized the symptoms this time and made it to a shade tree by himself. He wouldn't go to the house, but sat in the shade for the rest of the afternoon.

After supper Mama lit in on Daddy to go to Dr. Gregory about his spells, and Daddy kept saying he didn't need the doctor. Finally Mama sent me to ask Senator Clayton if he'd give Daddy a ride to town first thing in the morning. Senator Clayton said he had to go in anyway, which was just his nice way of putting it.

Daddy went, declaring he aimed to come to the fields as soon as this useless trip was over. It come close to noon and still he didn't show up. We went to dinner and he wasn't at the house. We returned to work and when sundown came we shouldered our hoes and struck out for home. When we got there, Daddy was milking old Muley in the barn lot.

Mama put supper on the table and we ate it. For a long time nobody spoke a word. Mama tended to slam things around, but I knew her; she wouldn't speak until Daddy did. Finally, he cleared his throat. "Pet," he said in a strange, tight voice, "I don't reckon I'm going to be much use to anybody for a long time to come. Except to fill up a place at the table."

Mama sat still. "Is that what the doctor had to say?" she said.

"That was the meaning of it," Daddy said. "I won't be able to work in the sun. It comes from the spider bite."

"He didn't know how long it would be?"

"Maybe a month or two, or a year, even the rest of my life. The doctor told me I ought to think on another line of work for a while." Daddy made a short, hard laugh. "You see why I found it hard to tell you, Jimmie? What in the world are we to do?"

"We'll make out," Mama said.

"Senator Clayton will have to take the crop," Daddy said.

"He'll have to take it with a shotgun," Mama said. "Well, it's work tomorrow." She stood up to do the dishes.

Come morning, when the men gathered at the well, Daddy went to meet them. John and I were already there. "The doctor gives me to understand that you folks won't be able to count on me for some time," he said in an apologetic voice. "I don't want you-all to give your work without getting it paid back."

The men shuffled their feet without looking at him. Mr. Moats finally said, "That's pretty hard news the doctor give you."

*The Least One*

Mr. Raincrow looked at John. "John, you're fourteen years old. Think you can do a man's work?"

"Yes sir," John said. "I can."

Mr. Raincrow looked around. "I don't see why his day can't count the same as a man's. He'll have to take his daddy's place."

"I had already made up my mind to that," John said.

Mr. Raincrow studied John and seemed satisfied. "If it's satisfactory with you-all, we'll let it stand that way," he said.

The men murmured, nodding their agreement. I looked at John. There was a hard, tight look on his face. Daddy looked at him, too, a curiously seeing look, then walked slowly toward the house. John turned to me. "Come on, let's get to the fields." He took his hoe from the picket fence and started off. I couldn't do anything but follow.

John had a name and a man's standing in the world. I was Boy, like I had always been, like I always would be. Because nobody had said a word about making a man out of me, capable of a man's work in this world.

CHAPTER X

SUNDAY, during the working season, was the best time. Nobody did much of anything. The men would sit on the front porches, chewing tobacco and maybe smoothing out a new axe handle with a piece of glass, or mending harness. Whatever they did wasn't work, only something to occupy the hand. The women would come out from time to time, sweaty from the stove-hot kitchen. The boys would play around the well.

We were in our usual places one Sunday morning, when suddenly, high up in the air, there came a heavy droning. Everybody heard it, the women coming out of the kitchens, the men stepping down into the yards to gaze into the sky, the boys turning to look in every direction.

It was a steady sound, frightening in its lack of direction. Finally somebody hollered, "There it is," and pointed. We all saw

it then, a low black ball of a cloud, scudding along in darts and weaves. Coming pretty high, it seemed to move in and around itself as much as it moved forward.

"Bees!" Mr. Raincrow hollered. "It's a swarm of bees!"

The minute he said it, all hell busted loose. Mama ran into the house, brought out a spoon and her dishpan and started banging on it. Everybody was doing some noisemaking in their own yard. Somebody was ringing a cowbell, somebody else blowing on a cow horn. I ran and got a stewer and a spoon apiece for me and John. Daddy was banging with a hammer on a plowpoint.

The swarm looked at first as though it would go right on over Bugscuffle Bottoms. But at the last minute it dipped and circled us, listening to the inviting noise, maybe, because that's supposed to make them settle in one place. I kept banging on my stewer, thinking that the swarm didn't matter, we had to influence the queen bee. Wherever she went, the others would follow.

The swarm circled lower and lower, moving more slowly with each dip in the spiral. It had centered its movements on the Lollard house. Mrs. Lollard was in the front yard, banging on a skillet with a knife handle. The other Lollards had their noisemakers going, too, and it looked like they'd win out. The swarm circled the top of a sweet gum tree at the edge of their yard and we all waited for the bees to light.

Miss Queen Bee changed her mind. Suddenly the swarm veered toward the artesian well, a black ball bowling along only four or five feet above the ground. Even through all the frenzied noise you could hear their sound, a slow and steady hum. Bees dripped out of the ball, dying, leaving a trail of corpses.

Maybe the water attracted them. They swung over the trough and returned, moving in a narrowing circle, and I held my breath. But not yet; they climbed the air, going up twenty-five or thirty feet. Then the queen bee made up her mind for good. The swarm curved, came directly to our house, and settled on the corner post of our picket fence, not fifteen feet from where I was standing. It was a curious sight, the bees packed into a tight, black crawling ball, each bee trying to burrow in toward the center.

Daddy hollered, "We've got to hive 'em. They'll up and go before you know it." He ran for some nails—he already had the hammer in his hand—while John took off to the barn for the handsaw. Mr. Raincrow was scuffling out some boards from a pile of scrap lumber behind his house.

You never saw a beehive manufactured so fast. Mr. Raincrow picked out the boards, Mr. Moats sawed them into rough lengths, alternating with Odell so they could whip the saw through the wood at top speed, while Daddy nailed the pieces together.

Daddy had two loose boards ready for the top. He stood back and wiped the sweat from his face. "They still there?" he said.

"Yes sir," I said. "Ain't moved yet."

"We got to get the queen bee into the hive. Then they'll settle down."

"They'll sting the fool out of you," I said.

"Bees don't sting when they're swarming. Just you watch."

He and Mr. Moats carried the beehive to within a yard of the swarm. The bees were still crawling over each other in a tight wad on the corner fence post. Daddy laid the lid handy and approached the swarm. With his bare hands he started scooping up bees, digging deep into the swarm, and dropping them into the beehive. It gave me the fantods to watch him. He was up to his elbows in bees; they crawled and dripped over his arms and buzzed about his head like a living black halo. He kept on scooping the bees until the great mass was inside the hive. He clapped on the lid and drove a couple of quick nails.

"She's in there now," he said, straightening his back. "If she'll stay, the others will, too."

The next day Daddy made a stand and we lifted the hive onto it, getting stung three times because now the bees had settled in and were against being disturbed. They stayed, too, and for weeks Daddy talked about the honey we would have next year.

AT LAST it was laying-by time. Now would begin the long lazy days of summer, with nothing to do but take care of the stock, cut the winter wood, do the haying, and wait for the

cotton to come out of the boll and the corn to ear in its sheath.

We had to put up with summer school, of course, six weeks of drowsing through the hottest part of July and August. I always liked school, but how can you learn anything when you can't even keep awake?

That year the Swords were behind everybody else so we had to spend an extra week in the fields, after all the other families had taken up leisureliness. We finished out the very final day at noon. Daddy met us at the well when we came dragging in.

"I sure wish I had my strength, so you wouldn't have had to work on past everybody else," he said apologetically.

"Don't fret yourself," Mama said. "It couldn't be helped."

"At least I'll be able to help with the winter wood. That's in the shade, and I ought to be able to swing a crosscut saw."

Not having to fret about everybody being in the fields while he sat in the shade, Daddy seemed to recover completely. Cutting wood in the bottoms, he worked as hard as anybody, and harder than some. The men cut their winter wood together, so it was fun being down there. After school and on Saturdays I had the job of trimming up the treetops after they were fallen.

It was just about the best summer I can remember. Milk checks still coming in every week and a crop making in the fields. Mama got to where she'd laugh and tell stories on the porch after supper. She favored ghost stories, and she told them as actual happenings, so you'd shiver and feel things rustling in the dark.

And right in the middle of that wonderful summer, death struck at me and missed by no more than a frog's hair. I was all by myself, messing around at the creek very early one morning. The creek was low, so that the water puddled muddily here and there, and the sand of the bottom was dried white. Lying on the sandbar was the biggest water moccasin I had ever seen.

I stopped, feeling my breath catch in my throat. He was sound asleep, his massive head laid across the thickest part of his mottled coil which was as big around as my thigh. A snake that size can pump enough poison into one bite that a body couldn't get a quarter of a mile before he'd lay down cold on the ground.

When death lies sleeping in your reach, you can't just walk on by. If I didn't kill him, I, or somebody else, might be blundering around the creek and get snakebit. I eased quietly back through the brush, then I ran across the field and got a hoe.

I sneaked back to the place where the snake had been, fearing that he had gone. He was coiled the same as before. I worked carefully, getting into position to strike; I wouldn't have but the one stroke, so it had better be a good one. The bank was steep and I had to be able to reach him, yet be sure the momentum of my blow wouldn't tumble me down on top of him.

I got my feet set, finally, with my weight solidly placed on the bank. I raised the hoe high over my head in both hands. There, at the top of the deed, I hesitated. I realized that he was beautiful. He was whole in himself, complete. I wished that we were not mortal enemies.

I made my strike. As I did so I balanced forward, so that I didn't hit him behind the head as I had planned. Instead, I cut him almost exactly in half. The front half struck up toward me, the mouth hinged wide to show the white cotton of its lining before the great fangs snapped into place. I dodged back in fear, the old snake-fear that man has lived with through the centuries.

I struck, he struck, and then his front half slid off into the shallow pool of water alongside the sandbar. I had not even succeeded in killing him. Without thinking, I leaped down onto the sandbar and began raking the water with the blade of the hoe, trying to finish the job.

It was my instincts that saved me. Suddenly, without knowing why, I turned my head to look down over my shoulder. The snake was lying at my naked heel in the bloodstained water behind me and, even as I looked, his mouth hinged open in that horrendous gaping. I saw the white cotton of death in his jaws, and knew he was going to take me with him into his own dying.

I dropped the hoe and jumped for the opposite bank. He struck, his head hitting the sand where my heel had pressed an instant before. The bank was high and steep and I spread-eagled myself on it, hands and feet clutching, head still turned, watching



the snake as he slid off into the muddy water to die. Then I managed to scale the bank until I sat sobbing in safety.

When I could get my legs under me, I walked a ways and sat down under a shade tree. I looked about and the world was still with me, the green fields stretching away, and over my head in the sweet gum tree a mockingbird sang as though death had not barely passed me by.

For the first time in my life, I felt the mortality of my flesh. Sitting in the shade of the sweet gum, I knew how fragile an envelope it is that carries the burden of a man's soul. It was a feeling a man could never forget. It sharpened the senses and saddened my thoughts at the same time. Cotton had never looked greener, the sound of the singing bird so sharply sweet. Then the thought came to me. I would have died nameless.

Daddy was sitting by himself on the front porch. I came to the steps. "Daddy," I said. "If I should die tonight, what name would you put on my headstone?"

With a sinking heart, I saw an amused expression in his eyes. "Why, I reckon I'd just put Boy Sword," he said.

"Like an infant child," I said bitterly. "Boy Sword, twelve years old." If he had answered me rightfully, maybe I could have told him about the snake. But he hadn't seen a mortal man when he'd looked at me, he had seen a boy with an idle question.

I never told anybody about my snake. I hugged him to me like a bosom buddy, which, in a way, he was, because he knew death the way that I knew it. The great water moccasin had become a part of me, as though I had been born with him in my soul.

From that time forward, I walked a step more separately. I had stepped back not just from myself, but from my family and all of Bugscuffle Bottoms. I saw separately. John: He was not only silent, he really didn't have anything to say. He had a strength and a solidness I didn't have, but his mind didn't move as mine moved, in quick and darting flashes. Mama: She had to hold tight to what she had; she lived on the edge of a steep gully, in which she ate corn bread for breakfast, and didn't bother to iron overalls and shirts, and her great fear was falling in. And Daddy:

## *The Least One*

He was as lost in his way as I was lost in mine. The world wasn't at all as he had thought it to be; he had put his faith into living a good life, doing for himself and his, and that world had been cut from under him. He was a gentle and bewildered man and maybe he didn't *know* what my name should be, any more than I did.

It was a harsh and bitter seeing that I turned everywhere but on myself. I didn't have to look at me, I thought, because I had felt mortality in my soul. I was only twelve years old and I thought I was up against it. I just didn't know the half of it. The black widow had been my fault; if I had toted the stovewood it would never have happened. If I had not been careless, the new calamity that fell upon us would not have happened, either.

AFTER his winter's supply of wood was cut and stacked to dry, Daddy always got to fretting about whether he had enough to last through the cold weather. In the very last week of laying-by time, when the cotton was beginning to show in the fields, he decided that we ought to go to the bottoms and cut another rick or two of firewood.

It made me mad. Here school had already turned out for the cotton picking and I had at least a week's free time before Daddy would say, "Grab your sack and hit the field, Boy."

He was talking about the wood at the breakfast table. I looked across at him and said, "I don't see anybody else aiming to cut and haul every last stick of wood in Bugscuffle Bottoms. Everybody else got enough to satisfy them."

"I don't want none of your sass," Daddy said. "I'll warm your bottom, you talk to me one more time like that."

I must have sounded pretty mean and disgruntled for him to land on me so strong. "Is anybody else going?" I said sullenly.

"I don't know," Daddy said. "I don't care. I reckon me and you and John can manage, can't we?"

I glanced at John. He didn't say anything. He didn't care if we spent our lives cutting wood. "I just don't see no sense to it," I said. "If I had my druthers, I'd never chop another stick of wood the rest of my life. Why you got to drag me into it?"

"Because three pair of hands are better than two," Daddy said sharply. "Now just hush up about it."

I had pushed it as far as I dared. Daddy sounded mighty like he was ready to hunt his razor strop. He didn't whip a person but about twice a year. When it happened, though, it did you till next time. So here went my last free week, or most of it. I felt the unfairness so acutely I couldn't find any suption to life that morning at all. And that was a part of it, too.

We caught out the mules and hitched them to the wagon, loaded in the crosscut saw and the axes, the sledgehammer and the iron wedges. I knew from the wedges that Daddy meant to tackle the big trees. My resentment upped another notch. I sat on the back of the wagon frame and drug my feet in the dust all the way to the bottoms, brooding about the injustice.

In the woods, Daddy picked out a nice big tree and set John and me to sawing it down while he cleared underbrush in the direction he meant for it to fall. After a while he spelled me on the saw. Then he took John's end, after setting a wedge with a tap or two of the sledgehammer. Daddy could throw a tree exactly where he wanted it. The tree came down with a swoosh and a crash and I stood back, panting and sweating. Daddy told me to trim up the top while he and John cut the trunk into lengths.

We had a wagonload pretty quick and John drove off to the house to unload. Daddy and I started on another tree, one on each end of the crosscut. After a while Daddy straightened. "Nature just called me, loud and clear," he said.

He walked off. I sat down on a stump we had just created and amused myself by chunking chips. I don't know what idle reason I had in mind. Maybe I figured if I hit the wedge a lick or two with the sledgehammer the tree would fall and we wouldn't have to saw on it anymore. I stood and picked up the sledgehammer and spraddled my legs for a good swing. This was a job I didn't ever have to do, because Daddy always wedged his own trees. Maybe that was a part of it, too. I took a long swing, like I'd seen him do, and the sledgehammer rang against the cold steel of the wedge. The tree shivered and groaned and tilted.

I had my body arched for another swing when Daddy rose up, holding the bib of his overalls in one hand, and shouted, "Boy, what are you doing?" He had stepped away behind the nearest bush, right in the path of where the tree was supposed to fall.

The sledgehammer was already swinging and I couldn't stop it. It rang against the wedge; the tree shivered and cracked ominously, and then it started to fall.

Daddy began to run out of the path of the tree. It should have been all right, but the tree didn't follow its natural path as laid out by the wedge, because it had not been sawed through. Tilted far over, it hesitated and then began turning in the direction Daddy was running.

I hollered, but there was no time. The saw was still in the cut and the tree, grinding against the stump, bit through its tough steel, snapping one of the sections singing past my face. I ducked from my own danger and even in the movement saw the tree swoosh down, a big limb knocking Daddy off his feet before the top of the tree smothered him.

It seemed a little short of forever before I could move a muscle. The woods had gone unnaturally quiet, as they always do after the noise of a falling tree. I gazed at the treetop, avid to see Daddy rising up to come and give me the whipping I deserved. But nothing moved, so I had to go and see.

I waded, waist-deep, into the treetop. Daddy was lying twisted on his side, pinned by the legs under one of the biggest limbs. His eyes were open, looking up at me. "You got to move it off of me," he said, his voice thin and strained. "A prise pole, and a block. Prise it off of me."

"I can't," I said, and I whirled to run. I couldn't bear the sight of what I had done. If I ran, it would no longer be true that I had killed my own daddy.

He hollered "BOY!" after me. Maybe, if he'd ever given me a name, had hollered that name, he could have stopped me in my panic. But his voice didn't even hesitate my feet. I didn't know where I was going, and didn't have a chance to decide, because I met John returning in the wagon. He stood up and yelled at me.

When I didn't pay him any mind, he jumped off the wagon, and took after me. He always could run faster than I could. He closed up behind me like an angel of death and when he was close enough he launched his whole body at me, knocking me off my feet. We went down, John on top, and he gripped my arms, holding me still.

"What's happened to Daddy?" His face was no more than three inches away, so I could read how frightened his eyes were.

"The tree," I said, in a thin-drawn voice. "It fell on him."

We looked at each other and I think John knew all that had happened, even to my carelessness that was the cause of it. Because he made the strangest gesture in all that strange day. He held me with both hands and he kissed me. Just like that, when we hadn't ever kissed in our lives, a brotherly kiss at a time when I needed to know that I was still in the human race.

"Come on," he said, starting for the wagon. "We got to tend to him. Hurry."

I caught the wagon on the move and felt it jouncing under me as John whipped the mules. When we reached the place, John jumped off and ran to the down tree. Afraid again, I stood outside the treetop while he went in to Daddy. He knelt down, where I couldn't see him. Then he came out. "We've got to get it off of him," he said. "A prise pole, that's what we need."

"Is he . . . ?" I said, but John didn't answer. Axe in hand, he was attacking a sapling as big around as my thigh. He chopped it down with furious strokes.

"Get a block," he said to me.

There was a section of tree trunk that had been left from the first cutting. Between us we got it positioned. We put the prise pole over it, sliding the thick end under the trunk of the tree. "All right," John said. "Easy now."

We strained. The tree groaned and moved. But our combined weight wasn't enough to lift it. We stopped, panting. "We've got to saw the limb in two," John said.

"The crosscut broke," I said.

"Then we'll just have to use the half of it."

I found the longest half and brought it to him in the treetop. Daddy lay with his eyes closed, his face as white as a fresh-cut gravestone.

"Daddy, we got to saw the limb in two," John said. "You think you can stand it?"

Daddy opened his eyes. "Saw it," he said. "Hurry, now."

John chose the place to begin the cut, close to the main body of the tree. From there the limb curved down, pinning Daddy into the ground. I went around to the other side. I caught the naked end of the saw and held it straight while John pulled and pushed it through the wood. Every stroke seemed to hurt Daddy, and the sawdust sifted down onto his face.

John stopped, considering the situation. I didn't see how he could be so calm. "We'll have to hold it up with the prise pole when it cuts through," he said. "Long enough to get him out from under."

I brought the prise pole. John braced it under the limb, got the prise pole on his shoulder. "Finish the sawing," he said. "I'll take the weight when it comes free."

John stood braced under the pole as I slowly finished the cut, the bark tearing on the underside as the limb began to drop. His knees sagged as he took the weight. "Come on," he grunted. "We got to move it to one side."

Together we heaved. We heaved again, and again, and then Daddy groaned. The sawn limb slowly keeled over to one side, the weight coming off of Daddy's body. Sweat stood beaded on his face.

"Let's lift him out of there," John said to me.

Daddy opened his eyes. "Don't move me," he said. "Go to the house. Tell them to get a door, bring it, and lay me on it. Go on."

John looked at me. "You go. I'll stay with him."

I ran to the wagon, unhitched Tony and got on his back, thumping him into a hard run . . . I galloped past the well, the harness jingling and chattering, and by the time I reached the house Mama was standing on the front porch.

"What's happened?" she said.

I didn't have time for more than a few words before she lit out for the woods. I went on to tell the Raincrows, and Odell hitched up their team while Mr. Raincrow went to take down a barn door. People were already coming from all parts of the settlement.

Soon I was riding Tony back to the bottoms, alongside the Raincrow wagon which had the barn door in it. When we got there, Mama was in the treetop with Daddy's head in her lap. She had wiped away the sawdust from his face. The men brought the barn door and lifted him carefully onto it. Still, he fainted with the movement. At the settlement, they lifted the door out of the wagon and placed it gently on the porch, while Odell took out in his T-model to bring the doctor.

On the porch, Daddy opened his eyes again and smiled, grateful for the cease of jarring movement. Mama wiped his face with a wet cloth. "What in the world happened, Lee?" she said.

He looked at her, then at me. "It was pure carelessness," he said. "I squatted in the path where the tree was due to fall, instead of going on into the woods like I ought to. It wasn't anybody's fault but my own." He was still looking at me as he spoke the words. I went away from there.

Some time later, I guess after the doctor had arrived and she could leave Daddy for a minute, Mama came to where I sat in the barn. She opened the crib door. "You can't stay in the corn-crib the rest of your life," she said.

I stared at her. "I wish I was dead," I said.

"That'll happen, too, soon enough," she said. "But first you got to do the hard part. You got to live your natural life." She drew back from the door, starting to close it. "Come on, now, as soon as you can. You hear?"

She went away, and I knew she had told the truth. So, after a while, I came out to join the people, though it would have been easier to have known the death strike of the water moccasin.

THE DOCTOR taken one look at Daddy and said he had to go to the hospital. His internals were all right, but his leg was broken in two places and he was down in his back.

They brought the funeral-home ambulance, put him on a stretcher, and rolled him away. Mama went into the back of the ambulance, paying no more mind to me and John than if we had been a pair of stumps growing in the dooryard.

The house, when they had gone, was still, empty. We took supper with the Raincrows, and Mrs. Raincrow wanted us to sleep there, too, but for some reason John wouldn't do it. We slept like always when we didn't have company, me in one bed and John in the other. John put out the light and the darkness smothered down on us.

"John," I said.

"Go to sleep," he said.

"Why don't you ever want to talk about anything?" I said.

"Maybe I can't get a word in edgeways around here," he said. His voice had a tinge of bitterness. It hadn't occurred to me that he might *want* to talk.

"Do I talk a lot?" I said.

"Trying to shut you up is like trying to put a stopper in a hornet's nest."

I lay there a while and then I said, "You reckon Daddy is going to die?"

"I don't know."

And then, because it was dark, because John was John, I could say it. "It was my fault, John. I threw that tree on top of him."

"I figured it," John said.

"I want to tell how it was," I said. He didn't say anything, so I told it, slowly and carefully, all the way up to Daddy taking the blame on himself. John still didn't say anything.

"Well?" I said.

"Well, what?" he said.

"It looks like you could find *something* to say when I tell you I nearly killed our daddy," I said in exasperation.

"It's done, ain't it?"

"It ain't done with until you can quit thinking about it," I said. "I can't quit thinking, and . . . John, I need some way to quit thinking."



"I'll tell you how to quit thinking about it," John said slowly. "Think instead about how it's going to be now."

"What do you mean?"

"It'll be up to me and you to gather the crop," John said. "Daddy won't even be able to oversee the job. It'll take two men to do it. You think you can make the other one?"

"I ain't a man," I said. "I'm just Boy. They didn't make me a man in the springtime, and they won't do it in the fall."

"Other folks don't make a man of you," John said. "It has to be your own doing."

"How can I be a man, without even a name to call myself by?" I said.

John sat up abruptly on the side of his bed. "I'll name you," he said.

I caught my breath for a minute. I let it out slow and easy, so as not to scare the moment away. "All right," I said. "Name me."

"First, though, will you make me a promise?"

"I don't know," I said. "What is it?"

"Promise me you'll be a man in the fields, that you'll do what I say, when I say, and how I say. Because I'll have trouble enough on my hands without you dragging your feet and raising dust all the way."

"You don't want a man, you want a slave," I said bitterly. "You just aim to give me a name to boss me around by."

"All right," John said. "I tried. But you missed your chance."

"I promise," I said hastily. "Now, what's my name?"

"Your name is William," he said. "William Sword."

I lay there in the darkness and took hold of it with my mind, slipping it on like a coat over my shoulders. For just a minute, it felt right and comfortable. But it was only an illusion; the name began slipping away. "That's not my name," I cried out. "You've got to do better than that."

"All right, then," he said. "How about Edgar?"

"You don't know the first thing about naming," I said. "One name is just the same to you as every other name."

I felt like crying. There for a minute as solid as a marble I had

believed that he owned the magic to name me with. The marble shattered, showing itself glass, and it had all been false.

"Thank you, John, for trying," I said quietly. "It ain't your fault you don't know how."

## CHAPTER XI

I MEANT to keep my promise to John. But already, the next morning, I resented having to carry out my part of the bargain when he had failed in his. William, indeed, and Edgar, forsooth! He had trapped me deliberately, for his own purpose.

The first time he told me to do something I reared back on my hind legs and refused. I obeyed grudgingly only after he had clouted me with the back of his hand. We wound up in a real fight and he enforced his position only because he was older and stronger. And yet, somewhere down under the conflict, was a brotherly union from our night alone in the house. I knew John better, and he knew me.

We were into the gathering of the crop before Daddy came home from the hospital. The cotton had come to its time of bursting and the days were endless, crawling on our knees through row after row, the tips of our fingers tender from the pricking of the bolls. I got sick of sweat in my eyes and the ache in my back, the cotton sack dragging behind, plumping heavier with each handful until it was weighed up on the scales and dumped into the high-bodied wagon waiting at the end of the row.

Mama was easier in mind about the communal work because we didn't go by the day anymore, we went by the pound. When you picked a hundred pounds of cotton in somebody else's field, he was obliged to pick a hundred in yours, no matter if it took a week. So we did pretty good, even while Mama was still leaving in the early of the afternoon to walk to town to visit with Daddy. John was the best picker in the bottoms; in good cotton he could do three hundred pounds a day and at worst he never got less than a hundred and fifty. I averaged around a hundred.

I'd have done better, except I couldn't stick to it but would wander off aimless to stay gone a while, or I'd start dreaming along, my hands slowing down to the pace of my thinking.

During that gathering time, only three days stand out. The first was the coming-home day, when Daddy came, pale and smiling, on the stretcher out of the ambulance. He wore a cast on one leg and over the hips. Everybody in Bugscuffle Bottoms, even Mrs. Lollard, gathered around to greet him.

The second day I remember was when I managed to go alone into the bedroom; they had put him to bed in my room. I said, "Daddy, I'm sorry."

"Let's don't talk about it," he said. "You didn't aim to do it. Take it as a lesson for the future."

"I can try," I said humbly.

"I want you to quit fighting your brother John," Daddy said, sternness coming into his voice. "He's doing the best he can."

"He's got the bighead," I said. "Always bossing me around."

"It's his place," Daddy said sharply. "Bighead ain't in it with hardhead, and that's what you're afflicted with. Can't nobody tell you nothing."

"I'm sorry," I whispered. I wanted to cry.

"What's the matter with you, anyway?" Daddy said more softly.

"I don't know," I said. "I try to change me. But it don't ever seem to work."

Daddy sighed. "Fact of the matter is, you're still a boy, trying to be a grown man. But it's time, Boy. It's time."

"Yes sir," I said, and went away. I knew it was time. But, until you do change, you don't know that you can. I still didn't know, and it wouldn't come until November.

The third day was the time after supper when Daddy called us all into his bedroom. "Senator Clayton was here this afternoon," he said in a factual voice. "He has agreed to let us stay on for another year, even if I am down in the back. Said he hadn't any other thought if that was what we wanted to do."

Mama's face was stricken. "It's not what I want," she said. "As you well know, Lee Sword."

"Pet," Daddy said. "How can I find us another place when I can't even get out of bed?"

"I'll find us one," Mama said.

Daddy pulled himself up on the pillow. "Jimmie, I don't want any foolishness," he said sharply. "You've got to look at things the way they are. How much of your milk money is left, after the doctor bills and hospital bills and all?"

Mama stood at bay. "None," she said. "We still owe. But I said we'd stay one year in Bugscuffle Bottoms and no more."

"I said don't be foolish. I have made the deal with Senator Clayton, and I have give my word. We are lucky to be able to stay. Now, that's the end of talking."

Mama stared at him, then she left the room. She went to the front porch and sat down in the willow settee.

Daddy turned toward me and John. In a slow, hurting voice he said, "Boys, help your mama all you can. She's gonna need all that you can give her."

We went into the living room.

The house remained still. Neither of us ventured to the porch; when I went to the well to wash I came and went by the back door so I wouldn't have to pass that silent figure sitting like doom had hawked down and fastened its claws into us.

We went to bed early because there wasn't anything else to do. I lay still in the darkness and listened toward the porch. After a while I could hear the sound of Mama crying. I hadn't ever heard her like that before, crying in a steady, sorrowing sound so subdued, so without hope of relief. After a while I went off to sleep, to wake again in the middle of the night and hear the sound still going on.

When I woke up again the sun was just coming up. I went out on the porch. "Mama," I said. "It's morning."

She turned toward the sun. "Yes," she said. "It is, isn't it?" She had got older during the night; you could tell by the lines in her face, and that morning for the first time I saw streaks of gray in her auburn hair.

She went into the kitchen and fixed breakfast. And on that

day, after sitting wakeful all the night long, she picked two hundred pounds of cotton. She did not say a word about Bugscuffle Bottoms, or the chenille factory. But it was a long time before she laughed again.

There was another day, too, in November, after the crops were gathered and the climate had turned the corner toward winter. It was the time of the Big Slick, though we didn't know then that it would become one of those events that people date history by.

It had rained during the night, a cold slow drizzle, and the cows hadn't come up out of the Tuxahatchie river bottoms. We had turned them out, after the corn was gathered, to let them range and forage, because Mama didn't have the money to buy feed and keep them producing during the winter. Nevertheless, until now they had come up at milking time to be stabled in the warm stalls. And there was, at least, enough milk for us.

In the morning, I went to the barn. The clouds were scudding along under a raw north wind, and I shivered in my overall jumper as I fed the mules. It was too cold to stay and pet Tony, as I usually did. I hurried toward the house, Foxy at my heels. It was going to be a hard, cold day, with maybe more rain. I made up my mind to stick close to the fire and read *Huckleberry Finn* again.

Foxy, at the door, asked to come in. I knew better than that; Mama would have a fit. "You just get under the house and curl up against the chimney," I told her. "You'll be warm enough."

She did just that, and I opened the door and hurried in. "The cows haven't come up yet," I told Mama as I passed through the kitchen. I went on into the living room.

"What's that about the cows?" Daddy called from the bedroom.

I went to his door and looked at him, propped up on the pillows. "The cows didn't come up till yet," I told him.

Daddy frowned. He looked toward the window. "They've gone into the deep bottoms," he said. "They smell weather coming. You boys had better roust out and find them."

"Oh, they can shift for themselves," I said. "This is Saturday, my setting-by-the-fire day."

*The Least One*

I started toward the fire, but Daddy's voice reached out and got me. "Don't you even worry about them cows down there, with bad weather coming on? Some of them might die if it gets cold enough. At best, they'll be suffering because they ain't been milked. Doesn't it worry your mind?"

"No sir," I said. "I let John worry about it. He's the boss man around here."

"Listen, Boy," he said. "We depend on the stock to make a living for us. We got to remember that the stock depends on us, too. You need to learn that."

"Yes sir," I said.

"I don't think you care about a living thing on this place except your Foxy dog and that mule Tony," he said. "You like Tony purely and simply because he's as lazy and unconcerned as you are. Boy, I'd be doggoned if I'd pattern my life after a mule."

His voice wasn't angry but it slapped at me like a whip, nevertheless, and I could feel the color rising up into my face. Then his voice softened. "Listen, Boy. You resent John's bossiness but I don't ever see you step out in front. There'll come a time when you'll have to, whether you want to or not."

Mama came to the door of the bedroom. "What are we going to do about them cows?" she said in a worried voice.

Before Daddy could say anything, I put in, "I'll send Foxy. She'll round them up and bring them right home. See if she don't." I went and called Foxy from under the house. She looked warm and dry and confident. "Foxy," I said. "The cows. Go find the cows."

She knew what I wanted. But she didn't relish the thought of doing it on this day. Winter-cold moisture was misting down on her coat. She shook herself and started back under the house.

I caught her by the scruff of the neck, turned her. "The cows," I repeated firmly. "Fetch the cows."

She went on then, slowly, and disappeared.

Instead of warming, the day grew colder by the minute. The rain was coming down harder, too. I ate my breakfast, then I sat by the fire and plunged into *Huckleberry Finn*.

I don't know how much time had passed, when Mama said, "Your dog has come home."

I lifted my head. "Did she bring the cows?"

"No."

I couldn't hardly believe it. I went outside. Foxy sat in the yard, drenched to the skin. I was mad. "Go bring me them cows," I said.

She whined and shivered. Then, cringing on her belly, she went under the house to her warm place by the chimney.

"You can't expect a dog to do what you won't do yourself," Mama said from the kitchen door. "She ain't never brought the cows except from the pasture. She ain't but a puppy yet."

John got up and put on his jumper.

"What are you doing?" I said, raising my head.

"I'm going to find them cows."

I threw the book across the house. "All right!" I said. "Everybody wants me to catch my death of pneumonia riding that mule all over the bottoms in this rain and cold. So I'll do it and I hope it pleases all of you."

In the barn, John was saddling Prince. "If you do get them back," he said, "blow the horn so I'll know it. I'll do the same if I find them."

We set out without further conversation. John plunged off in one direction; I nudged Tony in the other. The clouds were lower, darker, now, and I could feel rain spitting against my face.

Within half an hour, the drizzle of rain had turned into sleet, driving hard under the wind, until I couldn't see a hundred feet. I stopped Tony, feeling the ice blasting like tiny shot into the bare flesh of my face and hands. I turned the mule's head to start for home. Nobody could expect me to keep on hunting the cows in weather like this.

We hadn't gone a hundred yards before Daddy's face came into my mind, the way he'd look when I told him that I had quit without finding the cows. If Daddy had been well, he would have come himself, leaving me and John both to sit by the fire. And he would have found the cows and driven them home.

"All right," I said bitterly, "I'll freeze to death and die before I go back without 'em." But Tony balked when he saw that I was turning away from the barn. I cut him viciously with the rope and jerked on the reins. He wouldn't move.

At last I got down and led him, pulling on the reins with all my weight, until we came to the woods again. The sleet rattled against the tree branches. The air was gray with it, heavy with it, and it was not melting like our sleet and snow usually does, but building a gray pebbled surface that was slick under my feet. It was the beginning of the Big Slick. The sleet would keep on all day and all night and all the next day until it had come a sheet of ice an inch thick. Trees would break under the weight of the ice, and cattle and men would die or be injured.

I didn't know it then, of course. I only knew that I was miserable with the cold. But, once my mind was made up, I buckled into the job. After a while, I got back into the saddle. This time, Tony decided to cooperate.

As the day wore on, as the sleet pelted down out of the terrible slaty sky, I quartered back and forth over the river bottoms. When I got too cold to sit in the saddle, I would slide down and walk, leading Tony by the reins. But I stumbled on the rough ground, frozen hard as a rock and fast covering with ice, and soon I'd have to climb on and ride again. We were both sheeted with ice because the sleet stuck and then froze. But I kept on. I had to keep on.

It was some time after noon when I found the cows, huddled in a tangle of trees, out of the wind. Their hair was ragged and sick-looking from the cold, and Muley, the oldest, was down on the ground. There were the two half-grown calves, too.

I rode Tony around and started them with the rope. Muley refused to get up. Fawn, Miss Shy, Spotch and the calves were moving off and I was afraid I'd lose them again in the storm. I got down, grabbed old Muley by the tail, and twisted it, hard. She lay still. I put my shoulder against her hip, braced my feet against the ground, and shoved. She groaned and got bone-cracking slow to her feet.



Tony took that minute to make his break. He reared against the reins in my cold hands, pulling free. I ran after him, crying with cold and frustration, lunged and caught a rein. He really jerked then, pulling me down on the ground. He drug me a foot or two before he decided my mind was made up. I got up and hit him in the face with my hand. "You dumb mule," I hollered. "Can't you see the trouble I'm in?"

He jerked away from the blow, then stood gazing at me with his wise and cynical eyes. Right then and there we quit being friends; I was a man with one idea and him a mule with another. I'd never again love him beyond all other mules in the world, and most people.

I got on his back and I put him after them cows with the rope. I mean, I really moved him. I'd never been able to make Tony walk faster than he wanted to. Now, though, he felt the difference in the weight and authority of my hand when I hit him with the rope, and he stepped out.

The cows drove well until we come to the edge of the woods. Once into the open, they had to face into the north wind. They lowered their heads, moving slowly into the driving sleet. Suddenly, then, with a commonness of purpose, they began galloping back toward the shelter of the trees.

I hustled Tony, trying to head them off. I shoved them out into the open again, and again they broke. I was crying because I'd never been so cold in my life. I rode and cussed and wept and somehow I got them moving, reluctant and slow, into the drive of sleet and wind.

It was nearly dark when we came in sight of the house. I could see the lights of the settlement, and smoke curling up from the chimneys against the lowering sky. Tony let out a hee-haw and took out for the barn on a dead run. I sawed on the bridle reins, trying to slow him, but it was no use; he passed the cows, heehawing like an idiot, me cussing and yelling. Then his feet flew out from under him and he thumped sickeningly to the ground. I was thrown clear and the ground was like iron, jarring the breath out of me.

*The Least One*

I staggered up, yelling at that crazy mule. Then I stopped, my breath locking in my throat. He was trying to struggle up, but he couldn't make it. He wouldn't ever make it. Because his left front leg was sticking out at a crazy angle and I could see the bone splintering out of the flesh. His eyes rolled white and he was screaming.

Like I had done with Daddy, I panicked, running away from him and his awful pain. The cows were going on to the barn of their own accord. I slammed into the house, ice-covered from head to foot, my face and hands raw with the cold, and the heat of the fireplace struck at me like a fist.

"What's the matter?" Mama said, starting up.

I ran right on past her. "Daddy," I said. "Daddy."

He straightened up in the bed. "What in the world's the matter, Boy?"

I stared at him, wild-eyed and panting. "Tony fell. He broke his leg." Losing a mule was just about the worst thing that could happen outside of losing one of the family.

"Are you all right?" Daddy said. "You're not hurt?"

His voice calmed me. "Yes sir," I said. "But Tony's leg . . ."

He leaned back into the pillows. He kept his voice quiet. "Are you sure it's broken?"

"I could see the bone," I said. "Sticking out . . ."

"Then you'll have to shoot him," he said.

I just stood staring at my daddy.

"Jimmie," Daddy called. "Bring me that hogleg pistol."

She had been listening. She came in, holding the pistol like it was a rattlesnake. Daddy took it and held it out to me.

"No," I said, drawing back. "No. I can't do it."

"Boy, you've got to," Daddy said.

"I found the cows," I told him. "We can wait until John comes. Then John can shoot him."

"Tony has always been your mule," Daddy said. "Can you let him lie out there and suffer with a broken leg because you ain't got the guts to do what needs to be done?"

"Listen," I said. I put my hands over my face. "I had to fight

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Tony like I had to fight the wind and sleet and the cows. He's a no-count mule and his only will is to do the least he can get away with. I know all that. But I still can't shoot him."

"All right then," Daddy said in a strange voice. "I reckon I've got to get out of this bed and do it myself."

He hadn't been on his feet since the accident. The doctor had said that if he was careful and spent the winter in bed his back would mend and he'd be a whole man once more. I heard him groan and I uncovered my eyes to see that his feet were on the floor and he was beginning to stand up.

"Daddy," I said. "Don't."

"I've got to," he said. "I can't let that mule suffer."

Mama took the gun out of Daddy's hand. "Stay in that bed," she said. "I'll kill that mule myself."

I looked into Mama's face. She was afraid of guns, always had been, but she held the hogleg pistol. I knew, because she was who she was, that she would do it.

I taken the pistol from her hand. I didn't look at either of them, though they were watching me. I went out into the sleet and the storm and the darkening of day and I was as cold inside as outside. Lord, how scared I was.

Tony was lying on the ground. I put my hand on his head and he tried to raise it. The leg hung like a broken match. He was breathing in short hard gasps of sound.

"You always were a no-count mule," I told him. "But I loved you like I'll never love another animal in this world."

I put the pistol close to his head, holding it with both hands because I was shaking, and I pulled the trigger. The gun thunderclapped loud and Tony jerked along his whole length. I waited a minute, and saw that he was still. I had to make sure. I shot him again, very carefully and steadily, and then I knew that he was dead.

I straightened, holding the gun barrel away from my body, and there was not a tear anywhere within me. I might cry again sometime but I wouldn't cry as a boy cries, not ever.

I stuck the pistol into my overall pocket and went around to

undo the saddle and heave it free. I sat down on the sleet-covered ground, close up against his belly. There was still a warmth of life there. I sat for a minute or two, feeling the sleet coming down into my hair and on my face.

It was only for a minute. Tony was coldening, and I knew it was a false comfort. I picked up the saddle and walked to the barn. Foxy met me on the way, dry and warm from her day under the house.

"You didn't help much, either, did you?" I said to her.

The cows were huddled along the fence. I opened the gate and let them in. I went up into the loft and forked down hay into their troughs. The cows were warming the barn and steam was rising from their flanks. I wiped the sleet and ice out of their long winter hair, working slowly and thoroughly until they were dry. I paid special attention to old Muley.

It was dark by the time I went to the house for the milk buckets. It was then I remembered John, still looking for the cows when they were safe in the barn. I took the horn from the kitchen wall and went outside and blew the long call that would let my brother know that he could come home, too.

When I went into the bedroom, Mama was sitting beside Daddy's bed, as though they had stayed together to listen for the shots and to wait for my coming. I took the gun out of my pocket and handed it to Daddy. "It's done," I said.

He made a move of his hand toward me. "Listen, Boy, I . . ."

"Don't call me Boy," I said. "I found a name out yonder."

It was the God's truth. Sitting there against the dead mule's warm belly, after it was all over and done with, the name had come to me as complete as a pearl.

"Now, ain't that fine?" Daddy said. "Ain't that just fine."

I looked at him, and saw a tear on his cheek. I wondered why he'd want to cry. "I'd better get the milking done," I said. "John's gonna come in cold and tired."

I went on, and got the milk buckets, and went to the barn. I had finished milking before John came in out of the dark and the cold.

AFTERWARDS

IT WAS two more years before ever we left Bugscuffle Bottoms. In the spring, Daddy's back was better, though he walked forever with a limp. We got another mule and called him George. We had a good crop and saved money, but not enough, and then another crop and then the time come to go.

We loaded the household plunder on the wagon and Daddy took the reins. We were going to our own place, up in the hills, part of it creek-bottom land. There was a good house and barn and not another family within a mile and a half.

Daddy called me when the wagon was loaded, using my chosen name as though I had never in my life been Boy. Where we were going, only my name would ever be known and I would never in my life be Boy again. We were all three close together on the spring seat as we left, because John had gone off to the CCC camp in Utah, and the time hadn't come yet for me to keep my promise to Senator Clayton that I'd talk to him when I was ready for college. As the wagon slanted up the Bugscuffle Bottoms road into the gravel road, Mama made a sound that was half a laugh and half a sob.

"I never thought I'd hate to leave a place named Bugscuffle Bottoms," she said. "But . . . you always leave a part of yourself, I reckon, any place you've ever lived."

Daddy laughed a small laugh. "That's a woman for you," he said. "Hate a place every day you draw breath in it, and cry a tear or two when you leave."

I looked back. The wagon crunched slowly on the gravel road, the four steel-tired wheels turning slowly and steadily. And so we went on.



**BORDEN DEAL** knows just how Boy Sword felt about finding his "true" name, for until he was twenty-six he himself had a name that didn't fit. "I was given two very gruesome names by an aunt," Deal says. "I won't say what they were, but they didn't feel like me. So, in 1949, when I published my first short story, I legally took my father's name of

Borden. I liked its steady, dependable sound and, of course, I associated it with my father, who was like that."

Of the undisclosed name Boy found for himself, Deal says, "I hope the reader will have picked his own name by the end of the story, sharing in the sense of growth and discovery that so often goes with the act of naming."

*The Least One* is based on Deal's own boyhood in the Depression South. He was born in 1922 in Pontotoc, Mississippi. His father, like Boy's, lost his farm; he, like Boy, worked long days in the cotton fields; and many of the incidents really happened, like the scene with the snake—"I broke out in a cold sweat when I was writing it." Deal describes his characters as "fictional creations," but acknowledges that his father, Borden Lee, and his mother, Jimmie Anne, were models for Lee and Jimmie Sword.

Deal finished high school in Mississippi and then went west to fight forest fires, to harvest wheat, to join the Civilian Conservation Corps, to work with a circus and briefly on a showboat. In 1942, he became a Naval Aviation Cadet. He flew for eighteen months, and after the war entered the University of Alabama. There he began to write. His first published story appeared in *Best American Short Stories* of 1949. He now has more than one hundred short stories, and nine novels to his credit. His first major success was *Dunbar's Cove*, a 1958 Reader's Digest Book Club selection, which became the film *Wild River*.

Deal's wife, Babs, is an author too, and they live in a sunny villa on the Gulf of Mexico, at Sarasota, Florida. They have three children, whose names were picked with care before each was born. Thus, Ashley, now thirteen, turned out to be a girl; Brett, now eleven, a boy; and Shane, now nine, another girl. "They like their names," Deal says, "and if they change their minds they can always pick another."





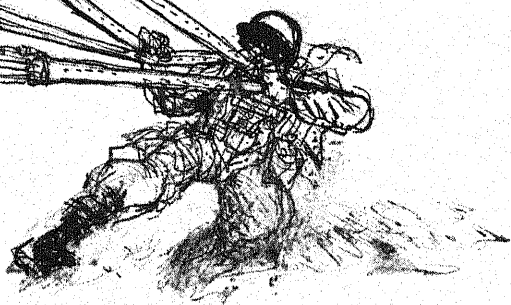
*"Curraheel!* is a fascinating tale of personal combat. In dramatic fashion it portrays the courage, endurance, initiative and fighting qualities of an American soldier on a European battlefield of World War II."

—GENERAL OF THE ARMY DWIGHT D. EISENHOWER

A condensation of the book by  
DONALD R. BURGETT

# CURRAHEE!

*(We Stand Alone)*



Illustrated by Raymond Houlihan



## ONE

DURING the winter of 1942, my older brother, Elmer, went into military service. Not yet twenty, he was well over six feet tall, blond, blue-eyed, broad-shouldered, and weighed 180 pounds. The neighborhood gang gave him a "beer brawl" send-off from the basement of our home, on the west side of Detroit.

Soon we received a letter from him telling us that he had joined the paratroops, a little-known outfit at that time. He wrote that it took a good man to get in and an even better one to stay in. This was enough for me, and I could hardly wait until I turned eighteen to prove myself. Knowing that neither Dad nor Mother would sign for me to enter military service before then, I went to my draft board and signed a voluntary induction slip, so I would be called up on the next draft after my eighteenth birthday.

I became of age April 5, 1943, and was ordered to report to the induction center on May 3. Men from all branches of the service were there, trying to get recruits. For a moment I nearly joined the Navy; then I spotted a paratrooper standing alone at a small table. He approached several men and asked them to sign up, but they crossed to the other side of the room. Walking over, I said that I would like to join the troops, and he looked at me in shocked disbelief—like a salesman who had just made his first sale.

The recruiter filled out a form to which I signed my full name,

*Curraheel*

Donald Robert Burgett; then he had me sign a paper which stated, "I do hereby volunteer to jump from a plane, while in flight, and land on the ground via parachute." After a close physical, I was sworn in and told to report on May 11 for duty.

THE FORT BENNING "Frying Pan" was so unlike the barren plains in Kansas, where I had taken my basic, that at first look it was like heaven. Here were tall green pines, even streams. The only fly in the ointment was the sand, hardly any grass, just sand.

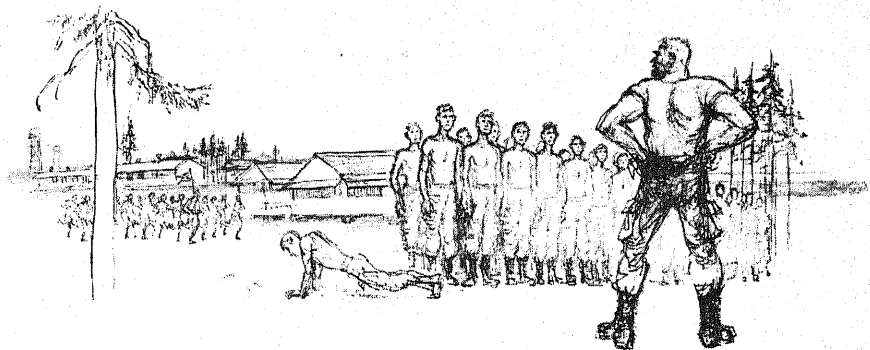
Small unpainted barracks stood in rows behind a group of weather-beaten tents. They had no glass in the windows—just large wooden shutters to be let down in foul weather—and some had no doors. Two rows of barracks faced each other, forming a street. At one end, the mess halls ran at right angles to the street. At the other end was the PX—one-armed bandits and all.

We had disembarked from the trucks and were milling around the mess halls under the pines when one of the best built men I had ever seen strode over to us, wearing a white T-shirt, jump pants and boots. He had blue eyes set in a handsome tanned face, and close-cropped hair bleached blond by the sun. He bellowed at a man with his hands in his pockets, "Gimme twenty-five!"

The man stood dumbfounded, then asked, "Twenty-five what?" "Push-ups. And make it right now, or you'll get fifty."

The man dropped into a prone position and started pumping them out. The newcomer introduced himself as a sergeant of the cadre. Then he noticed a man leaning against a tree and asked him whether he thought the tree would fall over. The man answered that he was just resting. The sergeant told him that no one ever rested here—he could hold the tree up until he was told to stop. He made the man push against the tree with all his might.

The sergeant then briefed us on a few unwritten rules of the camp. The cadre sergeants were boss, second only to God. At no time, outside his own barracks, was a trooper allowed to sit, lean, or stand in a resting attitude. At no time was he to walk; he must run or double-time. He had to run to formation, and if he took more than two walking steps to get into ranks it was automati-



cally twenty-five push-ups the first time, fifty the next, and so on.

By this time, the man leaning against the tree was quivering and sweating. The sergeant told him to recover and said, "We're tough on everyone here. Don't expect any sympathy, because we are going to do all we can to make you quit the paratroops. Follow me." Counting cadence, he marched us to the tents, which would be our home until we were assigned barracks.

When we had stored our gear the sergeant marched us around the camp and briefed us on the different fields and buildings. We were about two miles from the tents, on the road overlooking the airfield, when rain darkened the runways and came streaking toward us. Our tent flaps were up, and unless someone closed them everything we owned would get soaked.

"Let's see if we can outrun the rain," the sergeant bellowed.

We almost made it, too, but lowering the tent flaps didn't help much. A heavy rain on that barren ground, and small rivers were soon eroding channels around bunks and barracks bags.

The following day we were assigned to companies and put into barracks according to alphabetical order. We were allowed one day to get squared away on clothing issue: jump suits, boots and special equipment. Then our training began.

Five o'clock the next morning we fell out, stripped to the waist (as we did every morning thereafter, rain or shine), to begin our first day as paratroopers. After roll call we ran to the cadence count of the T-shirted sergeant, down the blacktop road toward

*Curraheel*

the Alabama ferryboat landing on the Chattahoochee River.

After a mile I began to breathe pretty hard, but knew that my second wind would come. We all expected the noncom to give quick march pretty soon, but we kept going on and on without any sign of the break we had been used to in basic training. Our feet beat a steady slapping tattoo and after a few more miles my body seemed to be operating on its own, my legs driving in rhythm, while I retreated, mentally, to an inner corner of my brain to relax in thought and go along for the ride.

Making a wide circuit of the countryside, we were heading back toward the Frying Pan when the man in front of me began to weave, then stagger. Suddenly he pitched forward on his face and rolled over. The sergeant yelled for us to keep going, and the men behind spread out and ran by on either side of the fallen man. Two more men fell out long before we reached a field, where we did calisthenics to cool off after our six-mile run.

Double-timing back to the company area, we fell out for breakfast, which consisted of cornflakes and black coffee; we poured half the coffee over the cornflakes to make them soft enough to eat. After chow we double-timed through the woods until we came to a road that encircled the Air Force barracks. The Air Force was just falling out for reveille, and our sergeant yelled out as we ran by, "What did the little dog say when he scraped himself on the barbed wire?" To which we all replied, as loud as we could, "Ruff, ruff, ruff." This went over like a lead balloon with the men who were just waking up. Finally we came to a stop in front of a large hangar, which was the parachute-packing shed.

Here an instructor in A-stage training told us that we weren't volunteering for any picnic; that most of us would die in combat. "In fact," he said, "if any man lives through three missions, the government will discharge him. You know that Uncle Sam isn't going to discharge anyone during wartime, so now you know that you haven't got a chance of living through this war."

I didn't give a damn. Some inner force kept telling me that I was going to make it; I was going to become a paratrooper and live through the war, and nothing was going to stop me.

In the packing shed we would learn to fold and pack parachutes by packing our own chutes for our first five jumps. We were assigned, four men each, to long tables, where we were familiarized with the type of chute we would be jumping with—the T-5 assembly. It was designed to open in the plane's prop blast, which created an opening shock of approximately five Gs.

The chute consisted of a twenty-eight-foot canopy with as many panels, each panel being made up of four sections. At the apex of the canopy was an eighteen-inch hole to let surplus air escape and keep the chute from oscillating. Twenty-eight suspension lines, each twenty-two feet long, ran from the canopy to four cotton-web risers, to which they were attached, seven to each riser, by metal connector links. The risers were actually the ends of the harness, which was made to loop around the body, pass through the crotch and back up to the shoulders. The opening shock was absorbed by the harness, tightening around the body rather than yanking up through the crotch. A bellyband held the small reserve chute in front of the wearer.

Worn on the back was the canvas-covered rectangular wire frame called the pack tray, in which the canopy, suspension lines and part of the risers were stored. A fifteen-foot static line led from the pack tray to a cable inside the plane and acted as an automatic rip cord. As the trooper jumped, the pack cover was ripped off and the whole works were pulled out of the pack tray. The prop blast then blew the chute open and snapped the break cord, which tied the static line to the apex of the canopy. The opening time for this chute was not more than three seconds, which permitted low-altitude jumps in mass formation.

After an hour or so of packing instruction we fell out for more calisthenics. We were doing push-ups in one of the sawdust pits when the instructor suddenly asked if we were tired.

"No!" we chorused, for we knew better than to say yes.

"O.K.," he replied, "let's keep going."

Noontime, we ran back to the company area and had chow that was a little more nourishing than breakfast. In the afternoon we were shown more about jumping, and the equipment that would

train us for our first jump. One ingenious device, called the plumber's nightmare, was a network of pipes about twenty feet high and eighty long. The men climbed up one end, then wormed their way through it in a prearranged course that was said to work every muscle in the body to the fullest extent.

The day ended about five, after more running and push-ups. Evening chow was nothing to raise any flags over: one helping of unrecognizable hash and black coffee. We were all tired, so we turned in about nine.

Late that night we were awakened by someone bumping against bunks and staggering noisily across the room. We turned on the lights to find that it was the first man who had fallen out of the run that morning. He fell on his bunk and lay face down for a few minutes. Then he said, "I tried to keep up. I couldn't help it if I passed out. They let me lay out there all this time. When I came to, I was too weak to crawl, and I passed out again in the hot sun. I wasn't able to make it in until the sun went down."

"They didn't send an ambulance for you?" someone asked.

"No," he answered. "And if this is the way they treat a man, they can all go to hell. I'm signing the quit slip."

Next morning the three men who had fallen out of the run were told by the sergeant to report to the orderly room; they were no longer in the paratroops.

"Where will they be sent?" one of us asked.

"To join the MPs! I don't want to hear any more about them."

THE SECOND day was a copy of the first, except for more physical training and more training on the packing and care of parachutes. The runs lengthened to nine miles every morning and the push-ups punishment came more often.

One sergeant asked a trooper, "How long is a string?"

The man answered, "I don't know."

"Oh, a dummy, eh. Give me twenty-five." He asked another trooper the same question.

This trooper answered, "Twice as long as half of it."

The sergeant said, "A wise guy, huh. Give me fifty."

When an instructor wanted something done faster, he would yell, "Hubba-hubba one time." We were told this was Yiddish for "Hurry, hurry," and it became our most popular saying.

Three weeks of A stage passed fairly fast. By the time we went into B stage we were in pretty good physical condition. A few more men had left our ranks, but the rest of us were determined to see this thing through. I didn't even mind the nine-mile runs anymore and wasn't at all tired at the end. As we ran through the woods to the packing shed, the early morning air would ring with the song, "I've Got Sixpence." Singing was one of the few privileges allowed us and we took full advantage of it.

B stage was designed to acquaint us with getting out of the plane, controlling the chute in the air, and landing. In one test, parachute harnesses were attached to hoops suspended horizontally about fifteen feet from the ground. The men would mount a platform and get into the harness; then, at the command, they would jump off and hang about three feet from the ground. There was no time to adjust the harness to fit, so when we jumped the loose straps snapped up into the crotch. Most of us weren't eager to go through this exercise more than once. While hanging there, we were taught to guide a chute by pulling on the risers, and to assume the best body position for landing.

Next came the landing trainers. Every man put on a dummy chute filled with sawdust and jumped off a platform four to eight feet in height. After landing properly we did a right or left front tumble, rolling over head first on the shoulder called for. We had to recover from a tumble at attention, without taking a step forward to halt the momentum of the body. Then we would run around and jump again.

Lambart jumped, but instead of recovering he lay on the ground groaning.

"What's the matter?" asked the instructor.

"I broke my leg," Lambart told him.

"Baloney, I don't see any bones sticking out. Get up there and jump again."

Lambart jumped again, and this time there was no doubt his



leg was broken. The sergeant looked down at him. "Well, now you can ride in the ambulance and take a little time off."

Our first test in height came with the mock-up door built atop a forty-foot tower. Many men would rather jump from a plane than make this short jump. From the top of the door a steel cable ran to the ground at an angle. Riding on the cable was a trolley wheel to which the jumper's harness was attached by two long risers. These allowed him to free fall to within a few feet of the ground, when he would be jolted to an abrupt halt; the wheel would then slide down the cable until his feet touched ground.

WE PASSED through B stage and entered C stage. During all these stages we looked forward to the evenings when we could go into Phenix City, Alabama, for a night of drinking, fighting with the MPs, and making out with the local girls, which wasn't hard. Mostly we got back to the barracks in time to grab an hour's sleep before falling out for another day of just plain hard times.

Our first morning in C stage we again practiced packing chutes. The last table to finish had to sweep out the hangar while the rest of us had a ten-minute break. We were sitting outside in the warm sun—officers and men mixed, for in the jump school rank meant nothing—when a sergeant approached a colonel. "You look too comfortable," he said. "Get that broom and sweep the road." The broom was a jerry-built rig of a number of broom heads nailed to a heavy plank, and usually required two or three men to pull it by a rope. The colonel took the rope and started pulling the broom up and down. As he passed us, he growled that while he was in the ranks years ago, sergeants told him what to do, and they were still doing it now that he was a full colonel. "It'll end someday," he murmured, "then watch out."

Before going up on the 250-foot jump towers, we each had to put on a parachute and be blown across a field by an airplane prop. After we had skidded on our bellies or backs for a ways, the instructor would order what type of recovery and chute collapse he wanted. If the trooper didn't get it right he would be blown across the ground until he did. Great holes were worn in the

"An instructor told us that  
most of us would die in  
combat..."

the  
10-foot  
towers...

NIGHT  
JUMP...  
from  
250 feet  
towers...

THINK!  
generals  
the first  
counts of  
paratroopers

"Some inner force kept  
telling me that I was going to  
make it..."

... become a  
paratrooper -  
and live through  
the war..."

R. Sullivan

troopers' fatigues, and sometimes patches of skin were missing.

Then we put on opened parachutes, hooked the canopies into large hoops and were hoisted to yardarms at the top of one of the towers. Here we hung on cables until we were released, one at a time, to float to the ground while an instructor ordered us to slip right, slip left, or make a body turn. I was hanging 250 feet in air, waiting to be dropped, when I saw a caravan of cars approaching the camp. I was more interested in them than in the chute and had to grab the risers fast when the sergeant turned me loose. On the ground, he told me it was a good thing I didn't foul up: in the convoy was President Roosevelt.

On the last day of C stage, we went to the packing shed and drew chutes that were reserved for jumping only. We were to pack our chutes for our first actual jump the following week. At my table four of us helped each other, and mine was the last chute to be packed. We were hurrying to get done so we wouldn't have to sweep the floor of the hangar. I had finished the accordion fold with the H iron and carefully lifted the canopy to place it on the pack tray when suddenly the whole thing squirted out of my arms onto the floor. "Oh, no!" cried Alvarado. "We can't start all over now or we'll have to sweep the damned hangar out by ourselves." We placed the pack tray on the floor and scooped the pile of silk onto it. While Alvarado and Beddel held the slippery bulk in place I tied the break cord, and with Barnes standing on top of the whole mess I laced the pack cover on. Viewing our handiwork, I felt pangs of doubt, for it looked more like a bag of laundry than a parachute.

"Oh, it'll be all right," said Barnes. "If you get all the lumps out of it, no one will ever notice the difference."

"Yeh, but *I* will, and if it doesn't work I'll come back and haunt you guys the rest of your lives."

By jumping on it, I got it flattened enough to pass inspection. We finished with seconds to spare.

We made our fourth jump from the high towers that afternoon and were to make a night jump from them at eleven, so all passes were canceled. The men were getting excited now, for

school was almost completed and actual jumping—D stage—would start next week. On completing five jumps we would receive our wings and diplomas.

The night was black and there was a wind blowing when we assembled at the foot of the towers. A sergeant explained that there would be a man with a flashlight on the ground. He would give a quick flash, on and off, and each trooper would have to guide his chute toward that point in order not to be blown into the steel girders of the tower. Three men were hauled aloft and the noncom yelled, "Do you see your beam, Number One?"

"No," came the disturbed answer.

"Release Number One," the sergeant bawled.

"Wait," came the voice from atop the tower, but he was already on his way down.

"Do you see your beam, Number Two?"

"Nooo-o."

"Release Number Two." This went on, with very few of the men seeing the beam, but only one piled into the girders. He hung there until the instructors could climb up and get him down.

We finally finished two jumps each, and headed back for a few hours' sleep. We got Sunday off, and most of us stayed in camp, playing poker or craps or taking turns at the slot machines.

ON MONDAY morning we drew our chutes, put them on and waited in the sweat sheds for our turn to load on the planes. Our first jump was to be at 1200 feet, the second at 1000, the third and fourth at 800, the fifth, a night jump at 1000. Once qualified, we would receive an extra fifty dollars a month and would be required to make a minimum of one jump every three months.

The day seemed hotter than ever before, and sweat ran down my arms, while a weak feeling came into the pit of my stomach—what they call "butterflies in the belly," I guessed.

Until recently our first sergeant had been a man named Axelrod, one of the best men I had ever known. There wasn't anything he wouldn't do for us men, and maybe this was why he was relieved of his rank and another sergeant took his place. There was

Curraheel!

nothing personal in our dislike of the new first sergeant, it was just that we felt cheated and didn't like the bum deal Axelrod got.

When our "stick" of twelve men moved outside to the runway, a sergeant came down the ranks checking our harnesses, static lines and break cords. He stopped in front of the new first sergeant and asked, "Don't your men like you?"

"I don't care what they don't like," he answered. "Why?"

"Because someone wrapped bailing wire from your static line to your canopy instead of silk for a break cord."

The first sergeant's face went a dark red as he turned to scowl at us. "Someone here really doesn't like me, but I'll put a finish to that." He stamped back to the hangar to draw another chute.

As the C-47 gathered speed on the runway, I felt my nerves and muscles twitch and jump. This was the first time I had ever been in a plane. I didn't even know when we became airborne. Looking out, I was surprised to see the field, trees and buildings far below and getting smaller. We started singing the troopers' song, "Blood Upon the Risers," to the tune of "The Battle Hymn of the Republic":

*"Is everybody happy?" cried the sergeant, looking up.  
Our hero feebly answered, "Yes," and then they stood him up.  
He leaped right out into the blast, his static line unhooked.  
He ain't gonna jump no more.*

CHORUS

*Gory, gory, what a helluva way to die  
Gory, gory, what a helluva way to die  
Gory, gory, what a helluva way to die  
He ain't gonna jump no more.*

*He counted long, he counted loud, he waited for the shock;  
He felt the wind, he felt the clouds, he felt the awful drop;  
He jerked his cord, the silk spilled out and wrapped  
    around his legs.  
He ain't gonna jump no more.*

(CHORUS)

*The risers wrapped around his neck, connectors cracked  
his dome;  
The lines were snarled and tied in knots, around his skinny  
bones;  
The canopy became his shroud, he hurtled to the ground.  
He ain't gonna jump no more.*

(CHORUS)

And so on. By the time we had finished all seven verses we had made the run over the Chattahoochee River and were heading back across the D.Z. (drop zone). The jumpmaster, standing in the doorway, gave the order: "Stand up and hook up."

This is it, I thought, the moment we've waited for. Thoughts of the infantry basic and of the struggle to become a paratrooper flashed across my mind as we hooked up our static lines.

"Check equipment." We checked our own gear and that of the man ahead. I was scared, but I couldn't quit now.

"Sound off," was our next order, and the last man in the stick yelled, "Twelve O.K.," and slapped the man ahead of him on the back. He in turn called out, "Eleven O.K.," and so on, down the line to the first man, standing near the open doorway. The jumpmaster barked, "Stand in the door, close up tight." The first man pivoted to his right into the doorway, placed his hands on either side of the opening and extended his left foot forward.

The jumpmaster was kneeling to the right of the door, looking at the ground. He tapped the first man's right calf, and the man shot through the opening, at the same time turning left toward the tail of the plane. His static line snapped taut and vibrated. The next man did a quick right pivot and snapped into the doorway; another tap on the leg, a command, "Go!" and he too disappeared from sight. The men were moving up, each keeping his left foot forward, the right one behind, like a boxer—never crossing the two. I could hear the wind whistling by the opening and see the static lines stretched tight between the steel anchor cable and the edge of the door.

The man in front of me turned into the doorway and I automatically took up the position of second man. My mouth went

*Curraheel*

dry and I shivered as the wind hit my sweat-soaked fatigues. There's still time to quit, sign the quit slip and go to the MPs, I thought; but the man in front of me was gone, and I found myself standing in the opening. The ground instructor's words came to me very clear, "Keep your fingers outside the door, don't look down, watch the horizon." A slight tap on the right leg and my body unleashed like a steel spring, straight out into nothing.

I was alone in the air. Everything seemed to be moving in slow motion; there was no sensation of falling. The tail of the plane moved toward the right, while the ground came up on the left and swung slowly around to the front. I yelled out at the top of my voice, "One thousand," and heard the canopy crackling over my head as the prop blast caught it.

"Two thousand." The connector links whistled past, and I ducked my head and cradled my reserve chute in my left arm, ready to throw the canopy out if and when I pulled the rip cord. "Three thous—" The opening shock nearly sent me through the bottoms of my boots, and I felt my cheeks pull away from my teeth. Not three seconds had elapsed since I had left the plane.

It was quite an experience to be traveling forward with the momentum of the plane at better than a hundred miles an hour, then being blasted backward at the same speed by the prop blast catching the canopy. The ground in front of me stopped its upward swing and started settling slowly back underneath. Actually I had tumbled over and over until the chute opened. This was crazy, the feeling of being suspended in midair.

I opened the risers and looked up; the canopy checked out—no blown panels, Mae Wests, or broken or snarled lines, in spite of the messy way I had packed the chute. None of the other chutes around me looked as if they were going down or up, which meant that my fall was at a normal rate. Checking my wind drift by watching my feet in relation to the ground, I turned my back into the wind by crossing the risers behind my neck and pulling them gently outward until I was in the right position for landing. A jeep and an ambulance were converging under me and the sergeant in the jeep called up through a megaphone,

"Stop bicycling." Unconsciously, I was reaching for the ground with one foot, then the other. I looked at the horizon, took up what I thought to be a good body position, and hit the ground.

Pain shot through my whole body, sending bright flashes across my eyes, almost blacking me out. Rolling over face down, collapsing the chute and getting out of the harness was almost more than I could bear. Every time I tried to stand, the pain shot through my right leg with such fierceness that I would fall down. I crawled to the canopy, rolled it up and fastened it to the pack tray. The trucks that were to take us back to the packing shed were on the other side of Cactus Hill, so I left the chute and started crawling through the spines and thistles.

Suddenly, the jeep came racing up. Oh boy: help, I thought. But the sergeant only asked, "Where's your chute?"

"Back there," I said, pointing.

"Get it and bring it to the packing shed." After eating me out for bicycling on the way down, he told me I would have to find my own way back; the ambulance was reserved for legitimate breaks. Then he drove off, his wheels kicking dust in my face.

I crawled back and retrieved the chute. The only way I could travel was to lie on my side, throw the chute forward, crawl to it and repeat the procedure. After what seemed like hours, I came in view of the trucks. I yelled and waved, but no one saw me and they drove off. I could have cried.

With a torn jump suit and a skin full of thorns, I finally made it to the blacktop road as it was getting dark. I managed to flag a car down. The driver, a civilian PX worker, drove me to a dispensary, where the medics X-rayed the leg and told me that I had only a small fracture and torn ligaments. They put a cast on the leg and told me to return to my barracks.

I asked for a pair of crutches but was told they didn't have any. Troopers with worse breaks had got them all. Hobbling outside, I cut down a branch to use as a crutch and hitched a ride in a jeep to my barracks.

My buddies looked at me. "What happened to you, take a furlough or something?" one asked.



"Hell no, I broke my leg. I suppose I'm too late for chow too."  
"Yeh," Alvarado said. "But you can have my candy bar." I thanked him and said that it would probably save my life.

The following morning, when we fell out for reveille, the first sergeant was still mad because someone had tried to kill him by wiring his break cord. He invited anyone who didn't like him to take one step forward. Three husky troopers did, and the topkick marched the squad down behind the latrines. I hobbled behind on my crutch. The sergeant stripped to the waist so there would be no rank showing. He took all three on at one time, and though he was a spindly-looking man, we soon saw that he was nothing but bone, muscle and lightning-fast fists. Within minutes two of the troopers were face down and the third was on his knees. The first sergeant announced, "I'm still the first sergeant here and anytime anyone wants to challenge my authority, we can settle it here with no rank showing." After that, the men had great respect for the sergeant.

Each day I lay in my bunk watching the men go out to make another jump. On the fourth day my buddies told me they would make one jump in the morning and a final one around midnight. They were jubilant when they came in for noon chow and could hardly wait for nighttime to complete their school. I felt sick inside about missing the graduation exercises and being left behind by men I had gone through so much with.

At dusk they fell out, and I wished each one luck as they went out the door. Lying on the bunk, I could hear them singing "I've Got Sixpence" at the tops of their voices as they double-timed through the woods toward the airfield.

Time dragged and finally I dozed off. The next thing I was aware of was the whooping and hollering of a lot of men swinging down the company street and giving out yells of victory. They were paratroopers now. The long weeks of A, B, C and D stages were over. Lights came on in all the barracks.

I kept waiting, but none of my buddies showed up. Maybe they've stopped in the next hut to celebrate, I thought. After a while I hobbled next door. All the troopers welcomed me in

and offered me drinks they had stashed away for the occasion.

"Where are Alvarado, Barnes, Beddel and the rest of my bunch?" I asked.

"Hell, didn't you know? They're all dead."

"Dead? But how?" I asked.

"The plane took off, and as the pilot throttled back on the port engine the starboard engine conked out; at that altitude they didn't stand a chance. The ship hit the ground and exploded."

We toasted their departure: "Here's to the last one; here's to the next one. Here's to the ones we left behind." We lived it up that night, celebrating like there would be no tomorrow. Finally I went back to my hut and to bed. Just before dozing off, I thought, If it hadn't been for my leg, I would have been on that plane. Twenty-four men, the jumpmaster and crew, all dead.

A FEW DAYS later the outfit pulled out and headed for Camp Mackall, leaving me behind to make up my qualifying jumps and catch up later. I reported to another barracks, where other troopers were healing from minor injuries and waiting to graduate.

In ten days my leg was feeling better, and I decided to start jumping again. Neither the doctor nor the company commander thought I was ready, but I insisted. One afternoon I found myself double-timing to the shed to pack my chute.

The next day we lined up outside the sweat sheds waiting our turn. Through the glare of a sunny Georgia day, we watched a plane swing along the Chattahoochee River and come in over the drop zone at about a thousand feet. The tiny figures tumbled out in rapid succession, and all seemed well until two of the chutes bumped together in midair and the men became entangled in suspension lines. One chute collapsed but the upper one held, and for a moment it looked as if they would make it.

An ambulance and jeeps were tearing across the field. We talked to the men under our breaths, hoping they would get down safely. But the lower man pulled his reserve chute, something we were specifically instructed not to do. The only time a reserve chute is any good is when the main doesn't open *at all*. Otherwise,

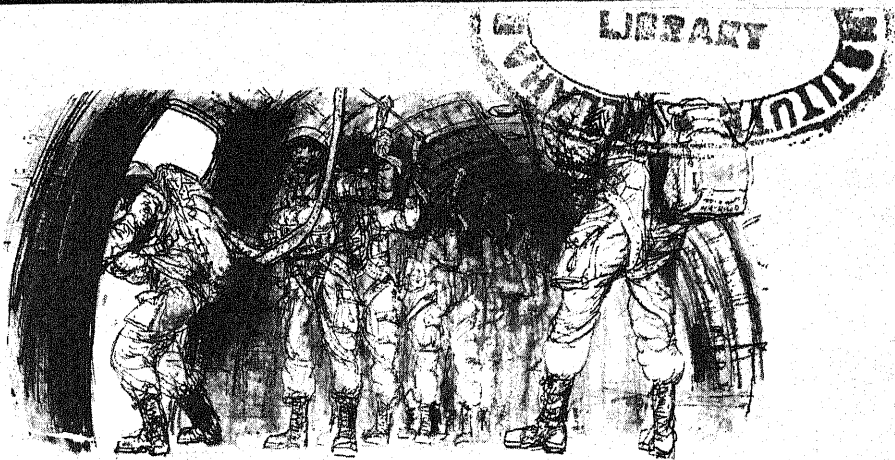
being shorter, it will blossom just under the main chute, so that both canopies are on a sharp angle, allowing the air to spill out and almost doubling the rate of descent. Now, as we watched, the small chute unfurled into the main canopy of the top man, collapsing it. The chutes looked like bed sheets fluttering behind the figures as they plummeted to their deaths.

The men hit the earth and bounced a couple of feet in the air. I couldn't get over the fact that they bounced. A sergeant leaped from a jeep, worked over the bodies a few minutes, then got back in and drove up to us. Climbing out, he held two pairs of bloodied jump boots. "Now does anyone want to quit?" he said, passing the boots down the line. After every man had handled them, the sergeant insisted that surely someone wanted to quit. No one stepped out of line.

A C-47 taxied in front of the hangars, and my stick boarded it along with another. Within minutes we were airborne and making a run over the jump field. I was lead man in the second stick. The first stick went out, then the jumpmaster looked up and simply said, "Go." I leaped into the prop blast and started the count. The opening shock nearly jarred my teeth out, but descent was easy and the chute, stretched tight, shone brightly in the sun. Nearing the ground, I turned my back into the wind and made a perfect parade-ground landing. What a feeling! My leg hurt a little, but I was jubilant. I had made a jump with no broken bones!

My first jump had been on October 18, 1943. This one was on November 2, and the third the next morning. On November 5, about three in the afternoon, we made another scheduled drop.

It hadn't rained for several days and the sun was shining bright as ever. This could be hard, as I soon found out. The U drafts caused by the sun's heat on the fields filled the chutes and made them oscillate. Swinging like a pendulum on the way down, I just missed the ground with my feet. The canopy hit first, collapsed, and I was slammed, whiplike, against the ground. Bright lights flashed in front of my eyes. When I could see clearly I found I had a four-inch split up the back of my helmet; there was also a terrific pain in my right leg. I rolled over on my back and was un-



doing my harness when a trooper came down on top of me. I tried to get out of his way, but his feet mashed my ribs a little. He scrambled up and asked if I were hurt.

"No," I replied. "But from underneath you've got the biggest feet I've ever seen."

Limping along toward the trucks, I heard someone yell, "Look out!" Almost overhead a man came hurtling down with an unopened chute; it was pulled out of the pack tray, but remained closed. He hit the ground a few yards away with a sound like a large mattress going *floomp*. I went up to him and nearly fell over when he opened his eyes and asked, "What happened?"

"Your chute didn't open," I told him.

"You're kidding," he said. "Help me up, I've got to get going."

"You're not going anywhere," a sergeant said, as a jeep pulled up, "except to a hospital." The man protested that he had to make another jump that night. He tried to get up, but he could only raise his head, then let it fall back. Then I noticed the crosses on his collar—who else but a chaplain could fall a thousand feet with an unopened chute and live? He had suffered a broken leg and internal injuries, but just how bad I never did find out.

That night I made my last jump, the easiest so far. I could hear other chutes popping open, but it was too dark to see anyone, or the ground. We must have jumped a little lower this

time, for hitting the ground came as a surprise. Standing up, still in my harness, I let out a yell that could be heard clear to the Frying Pan. I had made it. I was a full-fledged paratrooper now, and would get my wings. No matter what happened they couldn't take that away from me.

## TWO

### *Waiting for Combat*

THE ELEVENTH day at sea we sighted Ireland. I could see why they called it the Emerald Isle; it was the greenest land I had ever seen. The troopship docked at Belfast that night and people lined the docks and gave the "V for Victory" sign and waved. The following day we traveled by truck through the Irish countryside, arriving at Camp Clandibouy after dark.

Next morning we explored the camp. Surrounding it were small cottages and a stone tower on a hill. Some men working in the fields told us that this was the Clandibouy estate; Lord Clandibouy was away at war and had rented the U. S. government the land for the camp. They also gave us directions to town, but the camp gates were guarded and we had orders not to leave.

Six of us returned to our barracks, changed from jump suits to Class A's, and started to look for a way out. One man reported that we could get out through the obstacle course at the other end of camp. Thinking no one would try going through the course all dressed up, the cadre hadn't posted a guard there. We took off on the double, our long overcoats flapping about our legs as we ran. After our training, the obstacle course was a snap. We ran the length of the elevated planks that zigzagged over a marshy area and led to a creek. The creek was too wide to jump, but there was a large double A-frame built over it with ropes hanging from the crossbar to swing the troops across.

"Let's go," I said, and took off for a running jump. The overcoat kept getting in my way, but I leaped out over the water and grabbed a rope. The momentum carried me safely to the other

side. One by one the other men followed until only our little buddy from Tennessee was left. He made a good swing, but as he reached our side he didn't let go. He swung back.

"I don't think I can do it," he said, and now we all knew he couldn't, for the rope had lost its momentum and he hung over the middle of the water. He begged us to do something but there was nothing we could do. As his grip loosened and he inched toward the cold water, the more he pulled his feet up, until finally he looked like a little ball on the end of the rope. By this time most of us were laughing so hard that tears were streaming from our eyes. One instant he was hanging there, glaring at us; the next, there was a splash and he was standing in water up to his armpits and swearing. He waded out on our side and said, "Well, let's get started, the girls aren't going to wait forever."

The six of us walked into town and headed for the nearest pub. Inside were WAACs, WAAFs, civilians and GIs all drinking and having a ball. They were singing "Roll Me Over in the Clover" to the accompaniment of an old piano. We joined right in, minding our manners, and soon each of us had a girl sitting on our laps as we drank beer from pint mugs.

Later, taking the girls in tow, we made the rounds of the other



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pubs, then headed unsteadily for a community dance. I didn't know the first thing about dancing, but we all joined in until it broke up and we had to escort the girls home.

As we received no training in Camp Cländibouy most of our days and nights were spent in town. But after about a week, we started receiving shots and medical checkups, and in a few days we found ourselves under way, by truck, boat and train, to England. My group ended up at a small town called Aldbourne, in Wiltshire. A sergeant took us up through a gate in a brick wall. "This," he told us, "used to be the stables for a mansion."

The stables, now barracks, were built of wood and ran the full length of the courtyard. Each had a Dutch-type door and two small windows, a cobblestone floor, a double bunk on either side, and a small stove against the back wall. They were the best barracks I had ever been in, neat, comfortable, large enough for four men to live in and yet have a certain amount of privacy.

Phillips, Benson and myself were assigned to Stable 13. Inside, a well-built, curly-haired trooper was poking up a fire in the stove. He told us his name was Liddle and said, "The strawstack is on the other side of the latrines if you want to fill your mattress covers." We thanked him and went to do as he suggested.

A corporal was waiting for us when we returned. He welcomed us to A Company, 506th Regiment, 101st Airborne Division, and briefed us about the camp. Then he showed us the "Screaming Eagle" patch, told us to get ours from the supply room, and to wear them with honor, for this was the shoulder patch of a great division. We made him tell us the history of the regiment.

The 506th was activated July 20, 1942, at Camp Toombs, Georgia. The men were all young, two-fisted rough-and-tumble volunteers. The first step in training was the Three Mile Run—three miles to Mount Currahee, three miles up the mountain, three miles down and three miles back to camp. This twelve miles was run every morning, and Mount Currahee became a challenge and an inspiration. An Indian name meaning "We stand alone," Currahee became the battle cry and motto of the regiment. For troopers landing deep behind enemy lines truly had to stand alone.

During the next few days the four of us from Stable 13 became friendly, and sitting around talking in the evenings, we learned a lot about each other. Liddle was from Utah, a Mormon, very quiet, nondrinking and nonsmoking, and without a nerve in his body. Phillips was of Pennsylvania Dutch descent, blond, blue-eyed and ready to do anything, anytime, anywhere. Benson was from Tennessee, small, dark and an avid fan of crap games. As for myself, I was from Michigan, 145 pounds, dark hair, blue eyes and sometimes liked to go out raising hell and at other times to lie around camp reading or sketching. Benson, Phillips and I were all eighteen. Liddle was in his early twenties and was one of the original group that formed 506 at Camp Toombs.

Later that week, when all the replacements had arrived and the regiment was up to full strength, Colonel Bob Sink gave us a speech of welcome. Colonel Bob is the type of man you meet once and never forget. A real man with plenty of guts, he did more for the enlisted man than any other officer I have known.

The new men blended into the regiment as though they had always been there. We now had an outfit, a home, and a name, a feeling of pride, belonging and brotherhood that all paratroopers hold for each other.

Now the training started in earnest, for everyone knew that someday we would spearhead the invasion of Europe. We practiced day and night assemblies over and over again, until the difficult task of assembling large numbers of scattered troopers under all conditions became second nature and we could go through the whole procedure without anyone giving a single command.

Spring was just around the corner and the weather was unpredictable, wind one day, sunshine or rain the next, but still we had to keep in jump practice. We had simulated jumps, but they weren't like the real thing. Then one morning we got the word—a jump. It was scheduled for the next day so we spent this day getting ready for it. Machine guns, rifles and mortars had to be rolled into packs for dropping, everything ready to go.

Thomas, one of the men from my platoon, said that he was going to jump with a machine gun in his arms.

"If you can do it, so can I," I told him, and I strapped my squad machine gun to my harness.

Next day we took off, flew around for better than an hour, then made the drop. We hit the D.Z. and I was just getting out of harness when I heard a machine gun rattling on the field. No one could have gotten a gun into action that quick, I thought.

After we had assembled I heard that Thomas had unwrapped a belt of ammo from around the gun barrel after he got the opening shock, then, when he hit the ground, he had opened the tripod and, while still in harness, opened fire. This was a military first. Soon we would all be jumping steady with equipment.

On this same jump, a man whose chute didn't open hit Fleming's canopy and came down so close that Fleming reached out and caught his suspension lines as he hurtled past. The lines cut deep into Fleming's hands, but he held on until the other man got his reserve open, then turned him loose. Both landed safely.

The time came for a night jump. We were told that we would maintain radio silence, but a fire on the jump field would mean a strong wind had risen and the jump was canceled. The takeoff was easy, and our flight of ships formed in the English skies. We circled for almost two hours, sang songs and kidded each other. Sergeant Vetand suddenly said, "There's a fire on the jump field; we don't jump tonight."

I looked out and saw the dark shadow of another C-47 ghosting alongside us. Suddenly tracers lanced through the air between us and them. Antiaircraft shells started bursting in fiery, short-lived flowers, sending their hot ragged steel seeds to tear at the soft skins of our ships. The plane rocked and bounced, while we hung on to our safety straps, wondering what was going on.

The crew chief appeared, bracing himself in the doorway of the cockpit. "Be ready to go out on your reserve chutes," he said. "Don't hook up. We have run into a Kraut bomber formation, and those fires down there are a town burning, so when you see the signal get out of the door as fast as you can." Brennenstool was behind me, and I told him that I was scared. He said, "Don't worry, us guys from Michigan will stick together."

The signal flashed on, the lead man yelled, "Let's go," and we raced to get out. I hit the prop blast and was reaching to pull my reserve chute when something soft billowed up around me. I was in the top of someone's canopy. I yelled down for him not to side-slip, for I didn't want to spill off. In daylight I could have seen whether we were high enough for me to slide off and open my reserve, but at night I didn't want to take the chance. I rode his canopy all the way down. When he hit, his chute collapsed and I fell the twenty-two feet to the ground. I was winded, but otherwise unhurt. The man crawled to me and asked if I was O.K. It was Brennenstool. He had jumped after me, but I had landed on top of his chute. This was impossible, yet it had happened.

When we returned to our camp we found that quite a few of our men were missing. For the next ten days they came trickling into camp. Some had bailed out of disabled planes and had been taken prisoner by the British Home Guard and marched off to jail. Our jump suits were almost identical to the German paratroopers', and when the English found paratroopers dropping from the skies during a bombing raid they thought they were German invasion forces.

On a daytime drop, a trooper got entangled on a telephone pole. He hung there, struggling to get free of his harness, and just as one of us started off to help we saw two other figures approach him. One of them asked, "Can I help you, Trooper?"

"Yeh," the man said, "don't stand there like a damned fool, grab hold of the end of my jump rope and hold it tight while I climb down." The man on the ground held the rope dropped to him while the trooper tied the other end to the pole and slid to the ground. He stood for a moment, then turned and ran toward us. "Do you know who that was?" he blurted out. "That was General Ike." The poor trooper wasn't the same for several days.

SOON THE outfit moved to Torquay, in southern England, for maneuvers. The countryside there resembled Normandy and would be pretty close to what we would be fighting in. We were billeted in a large hotel overlooking the ocean. Our presence was

supposed to be a secret, and guards were placed on the doors so we wouldn't go roaming the city. None of us was allowed below the third floor, except when we marched clear around the bay to the other side of the city for chow three times a day.

Our first day in the hotel Phillips and I met a trooper who offered us a drink from his canteen. It was good old English beer, though it didn't seem possible, for no one could get out to a pub. "Come on," he said. "I'll show you where to get all you want."

We found ourselves sneaking through the officers' quarters and finally into the colonel's bathroom. "If we get caught in here," I reminded the others, "we'll get nine years in the stockade."

"To hell with it," replied Phillips.

The other trooper took out a jump rope and tied our three canteens to the end of it. "It was my idea, so you guys buy," he said. I gave him a ten-shilling note, and he put it on one of the canteens with a message stating that anyone filling the canteens with beer and retying them to the rope could have the change to buy his own drinks. The window was directly over the entrance to the



hotel's bar. Presently two English soldiers started into the bar and we lowered the canteens in front of them. They read the note, smiled, and disappeared with the containers. A few minutes later they returned, tied the canteens to the rope, thanked us and went back into the bar. We hauled the beer up and sat on the floor drinking it. Time after time we lowered the rope and never once were we cheated.

The next morning we were about halfway around the bay on our way to the mess hall when two small boats came roaring into the inlet. They headed straight for several moored ships, released torpedoes, turned and headed back out to sea. The torpedoes struck home, and two ships sank right at their moorings. At first we stood awestruck, then most of us let out a cheer—not for the German victory but for the way they had carried out the attack. Two small forces had penetrated behind the enemy lines, struck a death-dealing blow and made good their escape. We couldn't help but cheer the display of sheer guts and bravery.

For several days we fought mock battles in the country around Torquay. Then we went back to Aldbourne, where maneuvers and night assemblies were increased.

We were told that two of our three parachute battalions would make a jump for Prime Minister Churchill and General Eisenhower, while the third stood inspection for the visitors, who would include Generals Bradley, Taylor, Pratt and McAuliffe. A coin was tossed and we were the ones to stay on the ground.

The jump was a success except for one unopened chute which plummeted into the ground. Some glider troops standing to our left turned and booed us, adding that they would take their chances in a glider anytime. After the jump, Churchill had us assembled around the reviewing stand while he spoke to us as only Churchill could speak. We felt a great respect for this man and were honored to be in his presence.

This was our last practice jump, and we moved by trucks to Honiton Airfield, where we would take off to go into combat. This was the real thing.

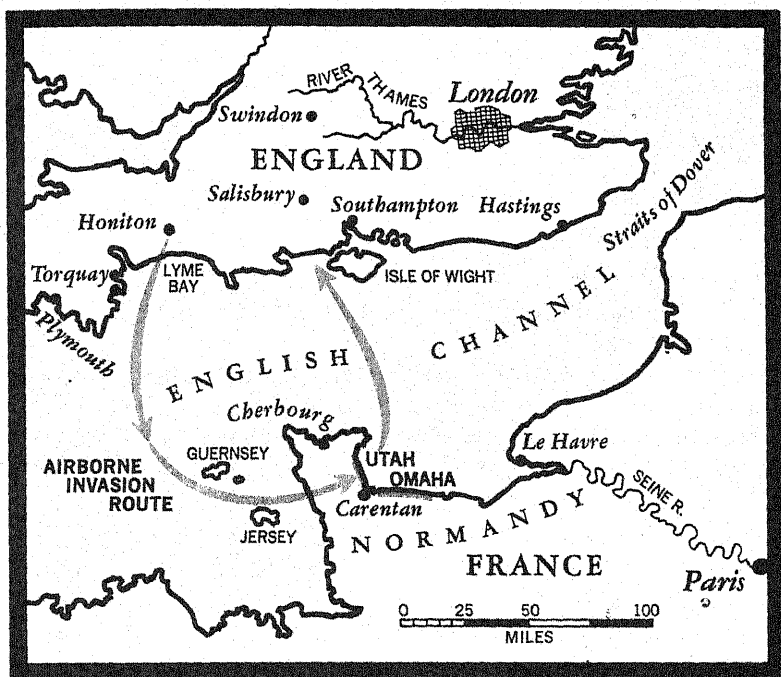
The next few days were spent in briefing tents, studying aerial photographs, maps, and three-dimensional models of Normandy. Beach landings would hit early in the morning of D Day, but we would be dropped behind the beaches several hours before. Each paratrooper had to learn the whole operation by heart and be able to draw a map of the area. Troops wearing German uniforms and carrying enemy weapons roamed the marshaling area to familiarize us with what the enemy looked like. We were told

that the enemy would use large mobile reserve units to reinforce any sections of their defenses in danger of being broken through. It was impressed on us very strongly that, regardless of how many there were of us, if we could detain any of these units even for five minutes it might mean the difference between success or failure at other strategic points.

Our main objectives were to take and hold all high ground surrounding Saint-Côme-du-Mont, Vierville and Sainte-Marie-du-Mont and the cities themselves; to capture or destroy the bridges crossing the rivers to Carentan; and to capture and hold the four exits leading from the beach into the interior, which would enable the landing troops to get inland unopposed, once they broke through the beach defenses. Exit 1 ran through Pouppeville, Exit 2 through Herbert, Exit 3 through Audouville-la-Hubert, Exit 4 through Saint-Martin-de-Varreville. We were also to cut all enemy communications, block all roads, knock out gun emplacements and raise as much hell as possible. At the end of seventy-two hours we would be pulled out.

On June 3, they issued each of us an escape kit: a small compass, an unmarked map and seven dollars' worth of French money. We were also given metal crickets, one click to be the challenge to anyone we met in combat and two the password to keep from getting one's head blown off. The verbal challenge was Flash, the password Thunder. If a man didn't answer with "Thunder" or two clicks of the cricket, we were to pull the trigger.

Next day we waited in our tents for the order to load on the planes that would carry us to France. It was raining and the strong musty odor of tent canvas became stifling with the heavy humidity of the warm June day. One electric-light bulb hung from the tent's center post, casting grotesque shadows as the men moved about, cleaning weapons and sorting their personal equipment on bare canvas cots. The rain fell harder and harder all day, but we were ordered to get ready and made our way out to the runways. I was fastening my wet parachute harness, while water ran into my eyes and down my neck, when we were told that the operation had been postponed. We didn't know whether to feel re-



lieved or mad, because we would have to go through the same thing again tomorrow, or the next day at the latest.

The next morning, June 5, 1944, came bright and clear and every man knew that for us the invasion would start this day. We were allowed to do just about as we pleased as long as we stayed in the compound. For afternoon chow we had fried chicken, all the trimmings and ice cream—sort of a last meal. Later we blackened our hands and faces for the coming night jump. Some of the men were doing the Jolson bit, singing “Mammy” and blinking white-looking eyes in blackened faces.

We were called to gather around a truck and General Taylor gave us a good-luck speech. He recalled how General Bill Lee had said we had a “Rendezvous with Destiny,” and Taylor in-



*Curraheel*

tended to see that we kept it. General Lee "invented" the paratroops and tried in vain to get the U. S. government to put the idea into action, but as usual some fat chairborne officials voted against it. The Germans adopted General Lee's plans and put them to use in Holland, Greece and Crete. Finally the U.S. opened its eyes and approved a paratroop unit under the command of General Lee. General Taylor closed his speech by telling us to yell "Bill Lee" when we jumped into combat.

General Eisenhower was also there, walking among the men, talking to them and occasionally laughing at the answers he got to his questions.

Finally we got ready all over again and carried our rifles and personal gear to the field where our plane waited. Our heavy equipment was taken out on trucks and dumped on the ground in a pile. Some of it was then rolled in paracks (parachute packs) to be carried on the outside belly of the plane and dropped in the middle of the stick by the crew chief. These items included bangalore torpedoes, bazooka rockets, machine-gun ammo, medical supplies, food and heavy explosives.

All machine guns and mortars would be carried by the gunners themselves, but everyone would take some ammo for these weapons to be sure there was enough when we hit the ground. Phillips was carrying so much equipment that he had to lie face down to get the bellyband of his harness fastened. One trooper stood on his back while I cinched his strap; he was unable to get up without help. He waddled to the plane but couldn't raise his foot as high as the step.

"Aw to hell with it," he said. "I'll stay here for a while." With that, he stood in a forward-leaning position, looking as helpless as a diver in an overinflated diving suit.

My personal equipment consisted of: one suit of ODs, worn under my jump suit—this was an order for everyone—helmet, boots, gloves, main chute, reserve chute, rifle, .45 automatic pistol, trench knife, jump knife, hunting knife, machete, cartridge belt, two bandoliers, two cans containing 676 rounds of machine-gun ammo, 66 rounds of .45 ammo, one Hawkins mine capable of



blowing the track off of a tank, four blocks of TNT, six fragmentation grenades, one Gammon grenade, one orange and one red smoke grenade, one entrenching tool, three first-aid kits, two morphine needles, one gas mask, a canteen of water, three days' supply of K rations, two days' supply of D rations (hard chocolate bars), one orange panel for identification purposes, one blanket, one raincoat, one change of socks and underwear and a few other odds and ends.

I got everything set except for the fastening of my bellyband, but when I tried to lie down I found it impossible to bend at the waist and had to fall into a prone position, breaking the fall with my hands. The two Air Force men fastened the bellyband, then lifted me bodily into the plane. We had so much equipment on that the most comfortable way to ride was to kneel on the floor and rest the weight of the gear on the bucket seat. When all the troopers were aboard the pilot read us a message from General Ike, wishing us luck and Godspeed. A canteen cup of whiskey would have been more appreciated, I thought.

We taxied into position, then went roaring down the runway and rose heavily into the air. The ship nosed down to gain speed and for a moment it looked as though we would never live to see combat, for we were heading straight for a row of trees. At the last moment the pilot pulled up and we were in the clear, heading toward the vast formation gathering in the English skies.

### THREE

#### *Combat*

NIGHT came while we were still over England. Now our wing lights were on and the inside of the ship was lit by little red lights. On either side of the plane, sixteen troopers sat or knelt. Some of them smoked, their cigarettes glowing in the dim light. The plane bounced and rocked, for we were flying at a low altitude. The crew chief walked back and said we were approaching the coast of France. Lieutenant Muir ordered us to stand up and hook up. The troopers had been singing songs, including "Blood Upon the Risers," but now we were quiet.

We flew between the islands of Jersey and Guernsey, then, making a sharp left turn, headed toward the Normandy beach from the back side, across the Cherbourg peninsula. Fires were burning on the ground, a result of the bombers that had preceded us. The plane rose and fell under the impact of bursting anti-aircraft shells. Sometimes it felt as though a giant hand had slapped the ship sideways, and we hung on to our static lines for support. Standing near the open door, I could see the flak bursts and strings of fiery tracers.

There are four armor-piercing bullets between each two tracers, I thought; how the hell can anything get through here in one piece? A quick *ticking* sounded as a string of machine-gun bullets walked a fast line of holes across our left wing. Large pieces of flak chunked through the ship every once in a while, and there was a constant *pinging* of smaller pieces. A couple of times I heard a grunt and I knew the shrapnel had hit someone. It seemed like an eternity, riding through this fiery sky.

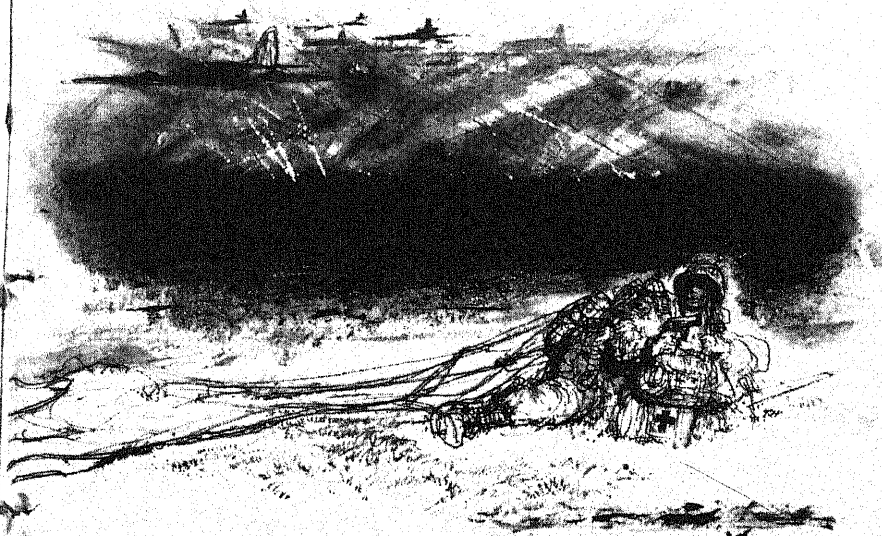
The time was between midnight and 12:30. Suddenly the green light flashed on. "Let's go," screamed Lieutenant Muir.

Go! a voice screamed in my brain. Hurry! Speed was the most important thing now, so we would all land as close together as possible. Everything seemed to be moving in slow motion, but

I knew it was really just fractions of seconds as I made my right turn into the door and with a left pivot leaped into dark space.

I could feel the rush of air, hear the crackling of the canopy as it unfurled, the sizzling suspension lines, then the connector links whistling past the back of my helmet. The opening shock nearly unjointed me. I pulled the risers apart to check the canopy and saw tracer bullets passing through it; at the same moment I hit the ground and came in backward so hard that I was momentarily stunned. The pilots were supposed to drop us from an altitude of six or seven hundred feet, but I know that my drop was from two hundred fifty or three hundred. The opening shock and hitting the ground were mighty close together.

The first thing I did was draw my .45, cock the hammer back and slip the safety on. The chute had collapsed itself, but the snaps on the harness were almost impossible to undo, and as I lay there working on them another plane came in low over the field. The big ship was silhouetted against the lighter sky, with long tongues of exhaust flame on either side of it. Streams of tracers



flashed upward to converge on it. Then I saw vague, shadowy figures of troopers plunging downward. Their chutes were just starting to unfurl when they hit ground.

That dirty son of a gun, I swore. The pilot was hedgehopping and killing troopers to save his own skin. I hoped he'd get shot down in the Channel and drown real slow. There was no sense in going to those men, for if by some miracle one of them were still alive, he would be better left to die as quickly as possible.

By this time I was free of my harness, had my rifle assembled and loaded, and had crawled to my canopy. Cutting a panel out with my knife, I stuffed it into a pocket to use for camouflage. Then I started out to find someone else—anyone. We were so widely scattered that all the months of practiced assemblies in the dark were shot. We would have to do this one on our own.

It was one of those mild June nights that poets write about, but this was neither the time nor the place for poetry. There was the booming of anti-aircraft guns and mortars all around and the close stitching of German machine guns raking the skies and hedgerows. The small-arms fire of private wars erupted everywhere and sometimes it broke out hotter than the hinges on hell's gates. It would rise in ferocity until the firepower became a loud roar, then taper off. It was anyone's guess who the victors were. The heavy hedgerows muffled the sounds, while the night air magnified them. It was almost impossible to tell how far away the fights were and sometimes even in what direction. The only thing I could be sure of was that a lot of men were dying.

The grass was wet with dew, soaking my knees and elbows as I crawled up and down. I could find no one, friend or foe. To be alone, deep in enemy country, makes a man feel about as lonely as a man can get.

Suddenly, as I was about to enter a small thicket, I heard the noise of someone else crawling. My throat went dry, my heart pounded, and cold sweat trickled down my arms. I rubbed my sweaty palms on the stock of my rifle, then eased into a prone position and brought out my cricket. I clicked it once as a challenge, keeping a bead on the spot where the noise came from.

No reply came and I took up the slack in the trigger. Well, this is it, I thought. I'll try him once more; if he doesn't answer, he's going to die. The cricket clicked again and this time a figure emerged from the thicket and crawled toward me. I had the drop on him, and if he made one false move I could blow his head off. He was about six feet away and suddenly I knew him. "Hundley, you dumb son of a gun, why didn't you answer me?"

He told me he had lost his cricket and at first his throat was so dry that he couldn't say the password. His only chance was to get close enough to be recognized. "Do you know where in the hell we're at?" he asked.

"No," I answered, "but if we make our way toward the heavy shooting, we should find some of our buddies." At this moment we saw two crouched figures moving toward us across the field. "You take the left and I'll take the right," I whispered, and instead of using the cricket I whispered the challenge, "Flash."

The reply, "Thunder," came back in a hurry.

The two figures turned out to be Slick Hoenscheidt and Red Knight. They said they could hear us whispering clear across the field. We decided to find a place to rest till daybreak, when we would stand a better chance of finding friendly troops.

We crawled in single file and came to a ditch that Red said we could stay in. I reminded him that the Krauts had had years to prepare range cards for every ditch in Europe and that we would stand a better chance almost anyplace else. We followed Red down the ditch to a big hole near some trees, settling down to wait. A machine gun ripped a burst toward us and we watched the tracers tearing through the trees and felt a shower of twigs and bark. Another burst raked the edge of the hole.

"That settles it," said Slick. "We've got to make a break for it and go back the way we came."

One at a time we left the hole between machine-gun bursts and made it back to the ditch. Here we regrouped and then I noticed the shell marks spaced evenly along the bottom. A mortar shell exploding on hard ground leaves a small spider-web mark no bigger than a man's hand, but the concussion and fragments

are terrific. If we stayed in that ditch we would be blown to bits.

Again we moved out in single file, following the hedgerows until we came to a place that afforded cover, and decided to hole up. A misty rain started falling. Soon large drops began soaking us. Taking turns sleeping and guarding, we huddled there until at long last the rain stopped with the first light of dawn. We scanned the countryside for some landmark memorized in our briefing. A lone church steeple stood silhouetted against the sky, and knowing that all the able troopers in the area would head for it, we started toward it.

We crossed a few hedgerows and came to a road. Slick cautiously poked his head through the brush, then leaped through, calling for us to follow. On the road, we found ourselves facing a group of troopers whose sweat-streaked, blackened faces looked as glad to see us as we were to see them. Some wore patches of the 82nd Division and some of the 101st. Lieutenant Muir stepped from the group and asked how many of us there were.

"Just the four," I replied.

"Swell," he said. "There's seven of us here; we're going to attack the town. You can come along if you want."

"Sure, Lieutenant, we were going that way anyway," I said.

Lieutenant Muir put Archie Ponds and Nick as scouts, and me as connecting link between them and the main body, a quarter mile behind them. We moved along for about half a mile without incident. Suddenly the road bent to the left and the scouts disappeared. After rounding the bend, I called the main group to a halt. The road ahead was empty. The lieutenant ran up and asked what the trouble was. When I explained, he told me to look for Nick and Arch, and the others would cover me.

The first field I entered had a tall pole in the center, with long strings of barbed wire extending outward from the top to the ground. This was strictly for our benefit: you can imagine what would happen to a trooper coming down at twenty-two feet a second and landing astraddle a sharp string of barbed wire forty feet above the ground. Then I saw two rifles and packs lying on the ground. Walking over, I nudged a pack with my toe and saw

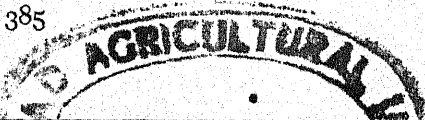
the name Ponds. A sick feeling came deep inside my stomach, for this was the equipment of our two scouts and here I was in the center of an open field with enough shrubbery around to hide a company of riflemen.

What happened to the two men and why hadn't they fired a shot? These questions filled my mind as I strolled back toward the edge of the field, expecting with every step to feel bullets tearing through my body. But I made it and walked onto the road. The rest of the men returned to the field with me and we searched the surrounding area, but found no sign of the two. (After the war, Archie returned from a prisoner-of-war camp. He and Nick had been taken prisoner together, but they became separated and no trace of Nick has been found to this day.)

We re-formed and I took up position of scout, about three hundred yards ahead, and started on down the road. Soon we came to a town, but the sign bearing its name was missing. The houses and barns were of gray stone, leaning against each other and scattered about haphazardly. Narrow streets wound between buildings that were sometimes connected by stone walls. The place was a natural fortress and could have been filled with enemy troops, so I signaled for the men to halt.

Just then three girls ran to me yelling, "*Vive les Américains.*" With a lot of hugging and kissing, they offered me a jug of wine, which I refused. Not that I don't like wine, but I didn't feel like being poisoned and I didn't trust anyone.

The lieutenant arrived and asked if anyone could speak English. One of the girls fetched an old woman, who said she used to teach English in school. The lieutenant took out his map and asked her where we were. She pointed to the town of Ravenoville, and told us there were other Americans here, but also many Germans around and in the town. Lieutenant Muir cursed as he examined the map, for we were about twelve miles from our objectives. "The Air Force dropped us all over the whole damned peninsula," he said. "Whose side are they on anyway? Now we've got to fight through twelve miles of enemy country just to get to where we were supposed to land in the first place."





We took up our formation again and I led the way up the hill toward the center of town. Coming to the crest, I stopped to look the situation over. There was a trooper hiding in a roadside ditch whom I recognized as Thomas. The place looked pretty quiet so I leaned against a tree and lit a cigarette. Just then a bullet slapped into the tree next to my head, but I figured it was a stray. I was continuing to enjoy the cigarette when another bullet slapped into the tree, a little closer. Thomas said, "You had better get down; a Kraut has been sniping at everyone that shows himself since early this morning."

"Why the hell didn't you tell me?" I asked, sliding down behind the tree. He replied that the only way to find out if the Kraut was still there was to let me stand there and see if I got shot at.

Lieutenant Muir came up and asked him if there were any more troopers around. "Sure, there's about nine of us," he said.

"Any officers?" queried the lieutenant.

Thomas nodded and said there were a couple in a house across the square. Muir started walking toward the building. When he was about halfway, a machine gun burst out and clouds of dust rose around the lieutenant's feet, sending him into a jig.

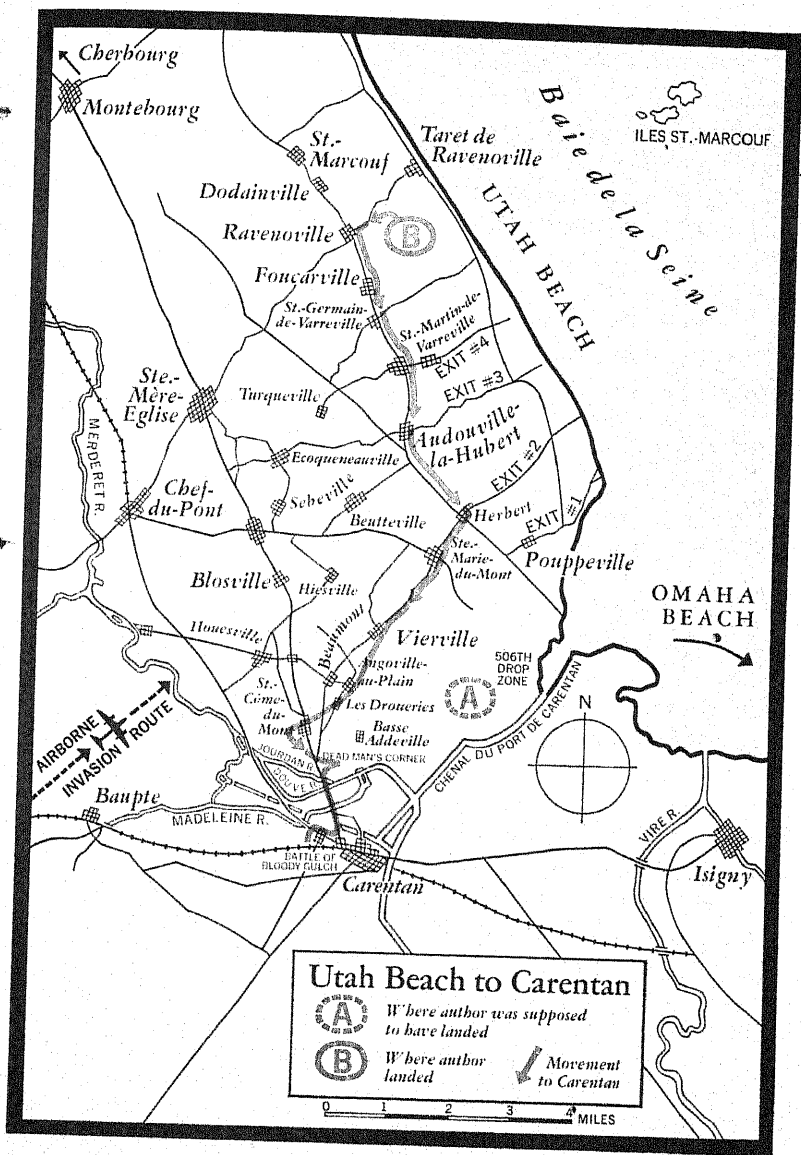
"You knew that German was there!" he screamed, as he saw Thomas rolling on the ground with laughter.

A second machine-gun burst and Muir was running hell-bent toward the house. He made it O.K., and Thomas told me that Kraut couldn't hit the broadside of a barn and that he himself had made several trips under the same conditions.

A few minutes later, Muir came pounding across the square and slid into the ditch. "From this point on the town is a German fortress," he said. "You can see catwalks in the treetops."

Looking up, I saw boardwalks running through the treetops. For crying out loud, I thought, they could run through those trees like squirrels and watch every move we made.

The lieutenant sent me to round up all the men I could find. I found some troopers in an apple orchard, among them Justo and Phillips. Then we all returned to Lieutenant Muir. There were now seventeen men and three officers. "That's plenty to take over



this place," Muir said. "We'll make a head-on attack. Let's go." He started running toward the houses, yelling and screaming as he went.

We all followed, yelling at the tops of our lungs, spreading out and firing as we ran. I saw my first Kraut running through the trees toward our right flank. I stopped, took a good sight on him and squeezed the trigger. I don't remember hearing the shot or feeling the recoil, but the German spun sideways and fell face first. Another Kraut stepped around a corner and stood looking down at the first soldier. I had a good straight-on shot at his chest. The rifle bucked against my shoulder, and he fell.

Fighting was at a fever pitch now. Men were running between buildings, through yards and over fences. Three troopers ran through a gate in a hedge surrounding a house and there came a long ripping burst of a Kraut machine gun. The three Americans died in the front yard. Shunning the yard, other troopers crawled down the hedge until they were in throwing distance and grenaded the house. One trooper leaped through a window, fired several rounds from his M-1, then motioned that all was clear. Running into the house, I saw a machine gun and boxes of ammo under a window near the door. The first trooper said the Germans went out the back as he entered. We left and rejoined the others in clearing out the remaining houses.

Two troopers came out of a building carrying a case of German hand grenades and ran down the street throwing the potato mashers into windows. German soldiers were pulling out of town by the back way and disappearing into the fields and woods. Their dead were scattered about in the houses and ditches. I don't know how many I hit. Those that fell when I fired would have dropped anyway if a bullet had passed close to them.

After occupying the enemy positions, we wondered why they had given them up so easily, for more than a hundred Germans had fled, leaving thirty dead and seventy-five prisoners. Four of our men had been killed. Phillips, who spoke some German, questioned the prisoners, who said that when we came running at them yelling and shooting, they figured the whole in-

vasion was directed right at them. They never dreamed that only twenty men armed with rifles would attack more than two hundred well-armed soldiers in stone fortifications.

Besides our four dead troopers there were one wounded man and another who had broken his arm on the jump and hadn't found a medic to fix it yet. Tearing the top from a German grenade crate, I fashioned a splint and tied it snug from his elbow to his knuckles with strips of parachute canopy. Then I put his arm in a sling tied around his neck.

THE OFFICERS assigned areas for us to guard against counter-attack. Phillips and I were among those guarding the road into town. We picked a spot where a ditch running from the houses connected at right angles with the larger ditch beside the black-top road. From here we could look down the sloping countryside to the beach. Below us were many wooded, hidden gullies filled with enemy troops. But we could make a good stand here, and if things got too hot we had a chance of getting back to the houses.

Phillips and I gathered all the Hawkins mines from the other troopers and set them down on the road. These would cripple a tank, if not stop it. We carefully picked up some cow droppings and flopped them down over the mines as camouflage. We had just finished when a Frenchman, driving a cart, approached our minefield, threatening to destroy himself, his horse and all our work. We waved at him to stop, but he just smiled and waved back. Phillips climbed out of the ditch and tried to grab the reins, but the horse reared and started through the mines. I hit the bottom of the ditch and Phillips came flying on top of me. We held our breaths and waited for the explosion that would send that screwball Frenchman into the next world. After a few minutes, we slowly raised our heads and saw that the cart had made it safely through the minefield with the driver sitting jauntily on the seat, oblivious to his near disaster.

The early morning march and the capture of Ravenoville had taken only a few hours, and it wasn't yet ten. Phillips and I felt hungry, so we each broke open a K-ration box marked "break-

fast." The chopped pork and egg yolks tasted like a banquet. We were leaning against the bank enjoying the sun when a bullet cracked between us, within inches of our faces. Our reactions were getting faster and we hit the bottom of the ditch together.

We peeked over the edge and Phillips yelled, "There he is! He just ran behind those trees, heading toward the houses."

I watched until I saw the Kraut moving on his hands and knees. Easing my rifle up, I asked Phillips if he wanted the shot.

"No," he replied, "go ahead."

It was an easy shot. I fired and saw the dust fly from his jacket before he fell. Then a machine gun opened up and raked the brush around us. As if that were a signal, the whole world seemed to explode, and bullets were flying so thick that it seemed I could reach up and grab a handful. All the troopers were firing now, and only a narrow blacktop road separated the two forces. Actions became automatic, firing at fleeting shapes crawling to different positions and firing, reloading and firing again.

At times, I could feel the muzzle blasts from the enemy rifles as they fired from the ditch across the road. The Germans used a smokeless powder and were hard to locate, whereas our weapons spewed out billows of smoke that gave our positions away and kept us moving to avoid getting our brains blown out. The smell of powder burned deep into our nostrils, leaving our throats dry, and a taste like sucking an old copper penny.

The firing died down as the enemy withdrew, leaving us to count noses again and to close the gaps left by dead troopers. Things became fairly quiet, with only occasional sniping. Phillips and I lay watching the countryside down to the beach.

Out at sea, a battleship slid slowly along parallel with the shore. "That's our navy!" cheered the men. We didn't think anything of it until sheets of flame erupted from the big ship's guns and smoke belched out toward the shore. The huge shells sounded like boxcars, coming closer and louder until they skimmed over the stable where we kept the German prisoners and buried themselves in an apple orchard just behind us. Whole apple trees turned end over end high in the air. The prisoners screamed in



terror. Troopers threw out orange smoke grenades as a signal that friendly troops were in this area, and the ship fired an orange smoke pot in recognition and ceased its fire.

"Why did they fire on us?" I asked the lieutenant when he came to check on our position.

"If you'll look at the map," he said, "you'll find that no friendly troops are supposed to be in this area. But the beach landings should be in by now, and it won't be long before we get reinforcements and can go to where we are supposed to be."

Hagenbuch returned from scouting around town and announced that he had chased a Kraut into a church, and had found himself being fired on by about twenty enemy soldiers. He had leaped back and slammed the door. "That's a hell of a thing to do in a church," he grumbled.

A lieutenant and two troopers volunteered to go back with him and kill the Germans. The lieutenant was driving a captured

two-man tank, and they all piled on and roared down the road. An hour later they returned with Hagenbuch lying face down on the tank. He had only been stunned, but the other two troopers were dead and the officer had a bullet in his neck.

We helped the lieutenant from the tank and placed him on the grass. Someone said I had done a good job setting the arm earlier, so I was elected to remove the bullet. After building a fire from a German packing crate, I heated my trench knife while another trooper gave the officer a shot of morphine. His tan skin had taken on a sickly pallor but he did not even groan when I cut in his neck. The bullet did not come out easily, and when the ordeal was over he looked up and said weakly, "I don't think I'm going to make it." But the last time I saw him he was still living and looked as though he was getting better.

The rest of the day passed easily and we consolidated our positions. Phillips and I built a two-foot-high stone wall across the open end of the ditch. Night came and several men crawled into the ditch to support us in case tanks tried to come into town.

When night was at its darkest a shadow appeared above us and started spraying the ditch with a burp gun. He was a big man and stood with feet wide apart, like he owned the whole world. We lay flat while he emptied his magazine, then, while he was snapping another in place, we fired at him and he ran. I threw a grenade and then the shooting started hot and heavy. Another Kraut crept up the road and opened fire with a burp gun along the ditch. Phillips lobbed a grenade and the gun stopped. No bullets had got past the stones we had piled at the end of the ditch. Fifteen minutes' work had saved our lives.

The firing gradually slowed, and the Germans pulled out. Again we took roll call, but everyone seemed to be O.K. Then we spotted Justo sitting on the bank, holding his helmet and groaning. There was a hole in the front of his helmet and one coming out the back. We got his helmet off and he reached up with a trembling forefinger and gently tapped his forehead as if expecting to find a hole there. But the bullet had entered the front of his helmet, spun around between the steel and liner and torn out

the back, leaving Justo with no more than a headache. "I thought the top of my head was gone!" he exclaimed with relief.

Rumors were going around that the beach landings had been repulsed and that we were stranded here to fight it out the best we could. But just before the sun rose we saw a sight I will never forget—American infantry coming up the hill through the hedge-rows. Their canvas leggings never looked so good before.

SO PASSED our first day and two nights of combat.

Lieutenant Muir came hobbling up the road leaning on a stick. A grenade had landed in his foxhole during the night and his leg had been fractured. He called us together and took roll call. Of the original twenty-two men, thirteen were left. We hadn't done badly though. We had dispersed more than two hundred enemy troops, captured a fortified town, taken seventy-five prisoners, killed at least that many more, and now commanded the high ground overlooking this portion of Utah Beach.

"We can head for our original objectives now," Muir said.

We walked back through town to see if we had missed anything. A jeep was parked outside the house where the three troopers had been machine-gunned, and a man holding a camera asked us to walk through the front yard past our dead while he took our picture. I told him to go to hell. "I'm not going to pose over my dead buddies," I said.

"People back home need to know what's going on," he said.

I refused, but some other troopers moved through the yard and he got his picture.

We returned to Lieutenant Muir and started on our way down the road toward Saint-Côme-du-Mont. We hadn't gone fifty yards when there was a roaring of an engine and we dove for the ditches as a German half-track came around the bend. We waited for it to hit the mines still on the road, but then we noticed the orange marker panels tied to it. One of us jumped up and yelled for them to stop. The driver hit the brakes just in time.

Troopers came tumbling out of the half-track laughing and joking and brandishing jugs of wine. We were the first friendly



troops they had seen, they told us. They had assembled much as we had and had attacked a German fortification. Now they were trying to get to their objectives, though there were no officers or noncoms among them. It was good to know that all the airborne forces had been so thoroughly briefed. The jugs were passed around and we all drank wine and munched K rations. Then the men from the other divisions went off and we started out again.

Just before we got to the crossroads beyond Ravenoville, two machine guns opened up on us. But luck was still with us and no one was hit as we scrambled for foxholes. The Krauts had the road blocked. Several times troopers tried to break through but were driven back. Finally Red Knight and Brennenstool routed the prisoners out of the stables and marched them toward the guns, hoping the enemy wouldn't fire on their own. But the men on the machine guns opened up, drilling holes in their own men in trying to hit the Americans. The prisoners screamed, "*Nicht schiessen*" (Don't shoot) and leaped for the ditch and possible escape, so we opened up on them too. They were caught in a murderous cross fire, and before it stopped they were all dead.

One trooper dropped his rifle and with a war cry ran straight at the nearer gun. His action probably unnerved the gunner, who fired a steady string at the trooper but never touched him. The trooper leaped over the gun and slashed the German's throat with his trench knife. With a quick left jab, he knocked the other Kraut backward and plunged the knife through his belt, killing him. The men on the other gun tried to make a break, but were shot down before they could run a dozen steps. With the road open we re-formed and started our long trek again.

The lieutenant was limping badly, so we stopped for a break. After a few minutes, he gave the order to move out again, but when he tried to get up he couldn't make it. We had to leave him to make his own way back to town while the rest of us, all privates, went on to Saint-Côme-du-Mont.

We passed through a section that had been blasted to rubble by bombing or shelling. The trees were shredded stumps with wisps of smoke laced through them. The ground was plowed

into loose dirt with large craters scattered all over. A deathly silence hung over the place, making our boots sound loud on the hard blacktop. This must be the home of death itself, I thought.

Soon the fields on either side of the road became greener and more peaceful. The sun was up now and the air warmer. A Frenchwoman was standing by the road with some cans in a cart. When Phillips asked her what was in the cans, she opened one, and it was filled with real fresh milk, something we rarely saw in the paratroops. Phillips pulled out his canteen cup.

"Don't take her milk," I said. "These people don't have too much to eat now."

"Neither do I," Phillips replied. "We've got a lot to do and I'm not going to do it on an empty stomach if I can help it."

That sounded like a good argument, so I held my cup out too. She filled both of them without a smile. I gave her a pack of cigarettes, and she took them with no expression whatsoever.

On we went, through Foucarville, Saint-Germain-de-Varreville, Saint-Martin-de-Varreville and Audouville-la-Hubert, sometimes being fired on by enemy small arms. At Herbert we made a right turn and headed along a road with swamps on either side, reminding me of the places I used to hunt back in Michigan. It surprised us to see a Sherman tank bogged down in the swamp, because we didn't think the beach landings had gotten in this far yet, but the road through Herbert was actually Exit 2, running from the Utah Beach clear to Saint-Côme-du-Mont.

Gunfire sounded from up ahead and we could make out the tall spire of a church which marked the center of a town.

"Here we go again," Justo said with disgust. "How come they haven't taken this town yet? Guess we'll have to do it."

"Like hell," a big private replied. "We've got other things to do. When we get to that town we keep moving, understand?" He shouted double time, and we started jogging at the familiar pace. We passed a sign marked Sainte-Marie-du-Mont and saw troopers crouched in doorways and lying in gutters along the road. Firing was coming from both ends of the street, but we kept on running. A trooper yelled to us that all the town wasn't taken yet.

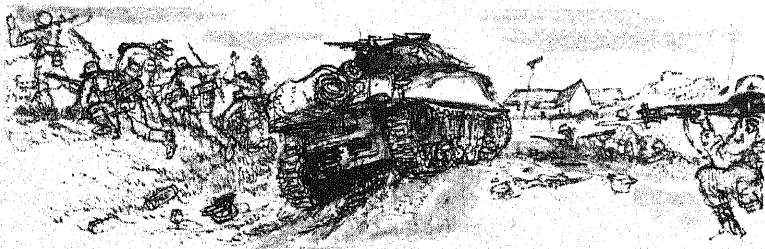
"Hell, we know that," one of our men replied, "but we've got other things to do right now."

The Krauts opened fire and we returned it as we ran right through the town. We had pretty good going until we met some troopers who had teamed up with two Sherman tanks and were mopping up some Germans in the fields. We joined them in firing on the enemy in the ditches, but the Germans were too well dug in to hit with rifle fire. The turret on one of the tanks opened and the tank commander said he would flush them out. With one tread on the road and the other in the ditch, the tank started forward. When it reached the enemy several of them tried running out across the fields but were cut down by our rifle fire. Three who stayed in the ditch were crushed under the tank.

The way was clear now and we went on to the outskirts of Vierville. Men were lined head to toe in the ditches and a non-com yelled for us to get down as enemy mortars were raising hell up and down the road. One man was dead in the ditch and another lay on his back in the road, his eyes staring, his throat moving as though he were trying to breathe but couldn't get the air into his lungs. There was nothing anyone could do but feel sorry for him. He just didn't want to give up the ghost.

Word was passed to get ready for an attack on the town. Small-arms fire grew heavier, and men in the fields on our right started running forward. Men in the ditches ahead of us rose up, looked over their shoulders, yelled, "Let's go," and waved us on. Soon troopers were everywhere, heading for the buildings.

Gaining the town, we worked our way toward the fields on our left, to take up positions against a counterattack. Large groups



of German prisoners were being herded back the way we had come. A colonel with a .45 in his hand barked orders that we were to keep going to the next town, and we were deployed with other men far out to the left flank. The fields here seemed larger, and I was tired. I could easily have slept in the warm sun.

Again we started forward, yelling and crashing through hedges. In field after field we were fired on by burp guns and mortars, but we could not make physical contact with the Krauts. We fired into the hedges as we ran, but the enemy faded away to rear positions. Heavy firing sounded to our right in the direction of Angoville-au-Plain. Artillery moaned high overhead—large shells heading deep into enemy territory.

We traveled for what seemed to be miles until we came on a large group of men deployed in skirmish lines facing another town, which was Saint-Côme-du-Mont. They stood as though waiting for something to happen. Two officers, one with a radio, were talking and studying a map. A noncom said the officer with the radio was a forward observer for the Navy.

"On its way," the observer said. "One, two, three," he counted as the sound of big shells came closer. "Now," and at that moment the shells started exploding in German-held land. He studied the map, watched the shell bursts, then radioed corrections. Again he started to count, keeping time with a finger. The finger came down hard. "Now," he said, as the shell hit. A lone two-story brick house quite a ways in front of us was now nothing but rubble. The accuracy of that artillery was frightening.

The barrage continued for about a half hour. Then we attacked and went into town under heavy fire. The enemy counterattacked with their infantry and by sheer numbers forced us out. We slammed back ferociously and gained part of the town. Next came their famed SS, which forced us to withdraw. But the troopers recovered quickly and retook half the town.

Then came a real shock. Horse cavalry charged in, and after bitter fighting the town was again in enemy hands. We found out from prisoners that the cavalymen were White Russians who had sided with the Germans. The roads, fields and town were

littered with dead from both sides. We lay in the ditches and hedges, hot, tired, dirty, sweaty and thirsty. I had been rationing the water in my canteen, which was now almost empty. How important water is to men in combat. What I wouldn't have given for one quart of cold, clear, sparkling water.

Then the order came and we were in another wild charging melee, yelling, cursing and fighting. On we went into town, running down the street and straight into the heavy fire of the enemy. Then we were among them, and the door-to-door fighting started. Entering one house, I swung into a room on the left just as a medic entered behind me. I caught a glimpse of his red handlebar mustache as he flipped a long-barreled six-shooter from the hip and blasted at the top of the stairs. A Kraut with a burp gun came tumbling down in a heap. The German must have started down after I had entered. Just before I left I wondered, Where in the hell did the medic get that cowboy six-gun?

When we finally had time to breathe we were in a ditch on a side road beyond the town. The remnants of the White Russian horse cavalry had withdrawn to the surrounding fields and were regrouping with the German infantry and SS. Some riderless horses wandered in the streets and fields. We were trying to eat some K rations and gnaw on the dog biscuits that come with them when the screwball colonel with the .45 ordered us to line up in a column of twos and get ready to move out. We reluctantly lined up on the blacktop, a perfect target.

I found myself standing next to Phillips. How we met up again is still a mystery to me. I could see that a lot of other troopers from the regiment were here also, and buddies who hadn't seen each other since boarding the planes were congratulating each other on still being alive. Suddenly it seemed as if every machine gun this side of hell had opened up and was ripping long strings of bullets in crisscross patterns through our ranks. Men dove for the ditches, and Phillips and I landed side by side. The colonel was nowhere in sight. With the Wehrmacht, SS and the Russian cavalry beaten in turn out of Saint-Côme-du-Mont, that officer had thought we had the world by the tail and

had lined us up on the road with our guard down. We never did see the Germans, who crawled to within fifty feet of us and were now doing everything in their power to destroy us. Every private there had more combat sense than that colonel.

The Germans were well hidden and blasting at us with every weapon they had. Smoke filled the air, burned powder almost choked us, and as we were caught by surprise, confusion reigned. Suddenly shouts of "Let's go!" sounded above the holocaust. Looking out of the ditch, I saw crouching figures in jump suits racing through the heavy gunfire in the direction of the enemy without waiting for commands. Within seconds we were all up and charging in a wild mob. Phillips and I cleared a six-foot bank on the opposite side of the road, and we all went storming across the fields and took the enemy by surprise, for they had expected us to fall back under their point-blank fire. As I ran I came upon a young German lying and firing a burp gun at us. When he saw me his eyes became round with fear and he rolled onto his side, squirting a long string of fire. The bullets crackled past my ears just as I shot him through the head.

Some of the troopers were making their way across the main road out of Saint-Côme-du-Mont. The rest of us followed, figuring the main body of Krauts was in that direction. Phillips and I got separated again, and I joined Trotter, Barrington and Hundley, who were carrying a machine gun on a tripod. All of them carried boxes of ammo, too, so my offer to help was taken right away. Barrington took the front of the gun, and with Hundley carrying the back two legs and Trotter and I loaded with ammo we started out into enemy country. The brush grew so thick around the fields that we soon lost sight of the other troopers.

A machine gun blasted at us from our right flank and we dropped where we were as bullets slammed into the ground around us. Then Trotter jumped up, ran a few steps to a hedge-row and disappeared into a hole. Hundley and I leaped in after him, but Barrington lay where he was. We waited for an attack, but nothing happened and we could see nothing in the underbrush to shoot at. Trotter stepped boldly into the open, trying to

draw fire on himself. He had a lot of guts to step out like that in front of a hidden machine gun. But there were no more shots. It must have been a lone Kraut who had fired on us, then taken off.

Hundley and I dragged Barrington into the hole. He was alive and conscious but had a bullet hole in his left forearm. Hundley bandaged the arm and we propped Barrington up and gave



him his rifle. Taking the ammo he had been carrying, we picked up the gun and ran to catch up with the rest of our men. We ran until my lungs seemed to be on fire but there was still no sign of our troops. We came to a place from which we could look down on a broad valley laced by three rivers, with a town on the far side. As we stood wondering what to do, two men emerged from a hedge to our left. They were Chute Johnson and Hagenbuch, who were also lost. Then we saw Germans running from the direction we had come from. They started crossing the road on our right, without seeing us at the end of the field.

The road here headed down toward the rivers, while the fields remained more level, so the closer the road got to the rivers, the higher the banks were alongside it. At the point where we stood the bank was eight or ten feet high. The Germans were sliding down it, running across the road and climbing up the other side. Hagenbuch called to Hundley and me to bring the machine gun down onto the road where we could get clear shooting at them. Hagenbuch was always laughing, and even now had a smile on his face. He sure had guts and some of his nerve must have rubbed off on me, for I was right behind him with the machine gun. Down on the road I opened up with the gun while Trotter, Chute and Hundley started firing with rifles.

The enemy was taken completely by surprise but recovered and returned fire from the other side of the road. I continued to fire at the Krauts who were still trying to get up the bank. Some of them fell back to the blacktop and the ditch. Two enemy machine guns now opened up from the other hedgerow. Bullets skipped along the blacktop like flat stones across a millpond. Others ripped past our heads. I didn't see how they could miss, for we were in the middle of the road without cover.

There was another long burst from the enemy and my machine gun jerked violently as bullets hit it. I heard a *plock* sound, and Hagenbuch jerked back, then fell forward. A bullet had passed through the top of his head, killing him. Two bullets had torn through the barrel jacket and three through the tripod. It was time to get to a more protected place. Carrying the forty-two-pound machine gun, I crawled up the bank we had come down and rolled to safety on the other side. Firing was hot and heavy and Trotter was running up and down firing from different places through the brush to give the Krauts the impression that there were more troops on this side than there really were.

I felt an overwhelming urge to sleep. It was now June 7, and we had been virtually without sleep since June 3, but I think my tiredness had more to do with the mental and physical strain we were under. Now I rolled over on my back, lit a cigarette and listened as the incoming fire got heavier and heavier. Trotter came running back down the line and told me to get busy, the war was still on and there were still plenty of Krauts out there. He was from Louisiana, and his eyes were narrow slits in a round face that reminded me of a huge bulldog.

Easing myself up to the top of the bank, I could see leaves jumping along the hedge from muzzle blasts, and fired on them with my rifle as fast and as accurately as I could. An 88 shell exploded in our bank and the war suddenly became lopsided against us. An 88 shell travels faster than a rifle bullet, so when it's fired point-blank, a man can't hear it coming. The big gun slammed at us repeatedly from down the road, working the bank and hedges and fields with methodic deadliness. Then a mortar



off to our left flank started dropping high-explosive shells around us. Shell fragments scudded along the ground, cutting the grass and everything else in their way like miniature scythes.

Trotter had more guts than any man should have, for while the rest of us fired from our positions he kept running back and forth through this deadly hail of fire, firing and chucking grenades. I saw his sweat-streaked, dirty face as he ran past. Jumping up, I followed him to the left end of the field where we fell in behind a hedge and tried to spot the mortar. A few minutes later it became silent and Trotter headed back down the line.

I became aware of a lot of shooting coming from our rear and realized that it was our own troops fighting their way in our direction. We were better than half a mile in front of our own lines. No wonder the Germans hadn't seen us when they were crossing the road. They never expected to find Americans this far behind their lines, and they were probably pulling back to form another main line of resistance when we intercepted them. Our happening to be here sure put the skids under their plans and now we had to stick it out until friendly troops arrived.

The sun felt warm and good, and I became relaxed even with the heavy fire going on until a figure came out of the brush just about where the mortar should have been and walked across to a crumbled brick farmhouse. They must be out of shells and this man is going for a new supply, I thought, as I squeezed the trigger. He went down hard on his back, arched until only his shoulders and heels were touching the ground, then collapsed.

I lay watching the bushes for any sign that would give the mortar's position away—a moving shadow, a puff of cigarette smoke—anything at all that would help me destroy the enemy. Every once in a while I would glance at the dead man, and I suddenly noticed his long blond hair. GIs were never allowed hair that long, and it agitated me in a strange way I can't explain. Something primitive stirred deep inside me, and I thought of muskrats and other game I had skinned for their pelts. Then the whole thing became clear to me: I wanted that scalp.

Nerves quivered through the length of my body and my hands

became cold and sweaty as I started crawling toward him. The prize was nearly within my reach when rifle fire opened up on me, and I was forced to run and dive behind a hedgerow. Twice more I tried to reach him, but each time was driven back by stubborn squareheads trying to punch eight-millimeter holes in my skin. Finally I decided to forget the whole thing.

The high whining of a powerful engine came to my ears and I heard Hundley yell, "Tanks!" The noise became louder and there was a clanking of treads as a metal monster walked toward us. A low hedge behind us thrashed wildly, then gave way, and out lumbered a General Grant tank mounted with a 37-millimeter cannon. The four of us waved and the commander directed the tank our way. After we had briefed him on our situation he speeded his tank up and down the hedge, firing with machine gun and cannon. Finally he told us he was out of ammo and would have to go for more, but he would report our situation and return. I hated to see the tank leave even if it was out of ammo. It gave us a feeling of security just to have it with us.

"Hurry up," I told him, "and for God's sake, don't forget us."

"I won't," he answered, and without buttoning up the tank, started out. Instead of cutting back the way he had come, he headed onto the road to make better time. That was a mistake. When he came into view of the 88 they drilled an armor-piercing shell clear through the turret, and the tank started to burn. The crew died instantly. Seeing them die that way made me feel bad. That commander was a hell of a nice guy.

More paratroopers started pouring through the hedges behind us and we knew we had it made. We yelled, "Hubba-hubba one time," and asked what had kept them. The firepower from the enemy was still so heavy that the new men had to take cover with us. An artillery observer came up, took in the situation and began relaying information to the batteries in the rear. After a few minutes he murmured, "On its way." Then shells came screaming in overhead, slamming deep into Kraut lines. He radioed back corrections and told them to "give it hell." There was a constant bridgework of shells shrieking and screaming in,

grinding life, limb and equipment to shreds. Incoming fire faded away, our artillery lifted and the enemy seemed glad to be quiet for a while. We formed together and dug in for the night.

EARLY the next morning, before the sun came up, we formed a line of skirmishers, facing the same enemy-held ground that we had faced the evening before. Another artillery observer moved up with us and radioed coordinates. Soon the shells were landing on enemy emplacements. In the road the tank that had been hit the day before still smoked a little. The body of the nice tank commander still sat in the turret. Men started referring to the spot as "the corner where the dead man's in the tank." Later it became known as "Dead Man's Corner," and is still known by this name in France today.

The barrage lifted and we charged, driving the enemy back toward the first river. Just before we reached it, they put in a desperate bid to hold the ground on this side. Again artillery was called in to do the heavy work while we took care of the hand-to-hand part. Near the river we ran into a group of Hungarians, who came stumbling out of the hedges crying, "Don't shoot, me Hoongarry." They were a sickening bunch.

It was afternoon, Saint-Côme-du-Mont was ours, and all the high ground surrounding it. We re-formed our units and dug in overlooking the broad river valley. Again Phillips and I had paired up and now we leaned on the edge of our foxholes eating K rations and enjoying the view. We watched German troops streaming across the bridges into Carentan, the town on the far side of the river that was our other big objective. Finally we estimated their numbers at better than three thousand. These were the main body of the troops the five of us had attacked the day before. If they had known that there were only five of us, they would have sent a detail out and walked all over us.

After setting up a good line of defense, some of us set about looking over the area and the German equipment that was strewn about. To our left was an orchard where the Krauts had had a stove and some tables, evidently a battalion mess. Two dead



American troopers lay there, still in their harnesses. Dead cattle and horses littered the area. From a wagon containing packs and weapons I picked a new P-38-type pistol. To the victors go the spoils, and we all looted the wagons, packs and enemy dead for watches, weapons or just plain souvenirs.

Night was coming on so we returned to our foxholes. Out front we tied grenades to small twigs, pulling the pins most of the way out and running wires from the pins to other twigs about fifteen feet away. Then, if anyone walked through and kicked a wire, the pin would be pulled out and the grenade would do the rest. After stringing dozens of these we settled down, two men to a foxhole, and took turns sleeping and watching.

Just before dawn the grenades started going off. We cross-fired with machine guns from either end of our company sector and the riflemen laid down a field of fire straight out, but not one shot came in our direction from the enemy. We ceased fire and waited, eyes straining, for the light to get strong enough to see

by. When at last we could see across the field, the sight that met our eyes was a large flock of sheep, all deader'n hell.

A big stillness hung over everything this morning. I guess both sides were regrouping and licking their wounds. The captain ordered me to take a verbal message back to regimental headquarters in Saint-Côme-du-Mont. I was to tell them of our strength, position and other vital statistics that couldn't be trusted to go by radio. Once away from the men there wasn't a sound. The shooting had stopped and there was no sign of life—no birds, no troops moving through, not even a breeze to rustle the leaves. It was spooky, and I kept looking around, half expecting to see something rise up from the hedgerows to leap on me. A sweet sickly smell reached my nostrils, the smell of death.

I had come to the place where we had waged the heaviest part of the battle the day before, where the five of us had made contact with the Germans. The road was littered with dead, so close together that when I tried to step between them I left footprints in the congealed blood. We had accounted for more than our share, but most of this carnage had been caused by the artillery and the concentrated attack by all the troops.

The stench was stifling and the quiet so dense that it rang in my ears. Finally I took to stepping from body to body as if they were stepping-stones in a river of gore. Some of the bodies were so bloated that they gave out noises like groans. It seems hard to believe, but I walked for about a quarter of a mile stepping from body to body. When I came to the end it seemed as if I had stepped from a world of darkness back into one of sunlight.

I followed the main street into the center of town, located the regiment's command post and delivered my message to Colonel Bob Sink. Then I headed for a walk around town. I was looking over some girls when a Frenchman came out of a doorway, calling, "*Vive les Américains*," and offered me a jug of wine. I motioned to him to take the first drink. When he understood, he laughed, tilted the jug and took a long draught. As he was still standing, I took the jug and joined him. I had quite a few drinks with other civilians, but I always made them drink first.

Some troopers were riding horses left behind by the Russian cavalry. With their rifles strapped across their backs and pistols on each hip, cowboy fashion, they rode through the back streets searching for stray Krauts or snipers. Many GIs hit by rifle bullets later said they had been hit by a sniper. A sniper is a highly trained man left behind when an outfit withdraws from an area. He is an expert on camouflage and an excellent shot. He picks a spot from which he can cover such places as water pumps, gateways and roads, and hardly ever fires on more than one person. He is not there to commit suicide but to kill a lone enemy without getting caught. We had had several men wounded by ordinary enemy GIs, but with a scope and a steady place to shoot from a sniper nearly always kills.

I came to a church that still had a steeple. Most church steeples had been blasted down by our artillery because they were used as observation posts by the enemy. Opposite the church was a garage which our medics were using for a hospital. I stepped inside to see if any of the wounded had some information on my buddies who were still missing.

Before I could talk to any of them, a jeep roared up with two tires shot flatter than cow pies. An American doctor leaped out and called to the men standing around to give a hand in getting the four stretcher cases off. We looked at them. They were dead. The two on the back were shot up so bad that splinters of white bone protruded from their limbs and bodies.

The doctor told us that he had picked the men up near the bridges to Carentan. Before he could get back, four Germans had leaped from a hedgerow and started machine-gunning the wounded on the stretchers. He had tromped the gas to the floor and burned rubber, but had not got away quickly enough to save the wounded. He begged us to help him find new tires so he could return and help the wounded, as firing had again broken out in that area. Some of the men knew where tires could be gotten from wrecked jeeps, and went for them on the double.

This was the end of my excursion and I headed back the same way I had come in the morning. As I cut across a field I came

upon a trooper sitting under a tree. He had a cigarette in his mouth and a lighter in his hand, but he made no move to light the cigarette. Then I saw the bullet hole in his forehead. The man had died so suddenly that his thumb still held the lighter trigger down, his arm rested on his right knee, and the lighter was just a couple inches from the cigarette.

I ARRIVED at the foxholes and found that the Krauts had made a small attack which had been dispersed quickly, but artillery was coming in everywhere. Benson, Phillips and I were lying on the grass near our holes when Jackson's big frame swaggered toward us. He asked with a grin, "How would you like to be rich?" We all agreed that we would and asked if he had found a fortune.

"Sure," he replied, and produced a handful of new, crisp French thousand-franc notes. At two cents a franc they added up to better than ten thousand dollars. After a little coaxing he took us to a shot-up truck that was loaded with French money. It must have been a German payroll truck. We filled our pockets, though all we wanted was to show off in front of the other men, for we figured it was German printed and would be worthless now. I put a few notes in my wallet for souvenirs; then, with my buddies, I paraded around in front of the rest of the men, throwing thousands of dollars through the apple trees and watching the wind carry them away. (Some months later I showed my souvenir francs to a paymaster and asked if they were any good. "As good as gold," he replied. I could have puked.)

We were looking around for more loot when Thomas and I came upon two dead Germans sitting upright in a water hole. A shell had landed in the center and the explosion had torn away their features. Their lips and ears were missing and the empty eye sockets looked black in the charred and wrinkled skin. The concussion had snapped their hands and feet off.

"They sure are a mess, aren't they?" Thomas asked.

"They never knew what hit them," I replied, thinking of my first night in the same kind of a hole and of how lucky we were that no shell had landed in it. We were about to leave when I heard

a low groan. I asked Thomas if he were trying to shake me up. "Hell, no," he said. "I thought that was you."

We were still looking at each other when the sound came again. For a full minute neither of us moved. Then, as we turned and faced the corpses, one of them started swaying back and forth while the other groaned. They must have been like this since our big attack the day before. How could they have survived the explosion of the shell, let alone lived this long in their condition? There was only one thing to do.

"You take the left and I'll take the right," said Thomas.

We both took aim and fired at the same time, it was the least we could do for them. Returning to our positions, we told the other men what we had found and they became quiet. I think they were wondering whether, if this should happen to any of them, someone would be as merciful as we had been.

We settled down on the edges of our holes again. The artillery was getting heavier and more frequent. The rivers below us were the Jourdan, the Douve and the Madeleine, which, along with myriad smaller channels, canals and marshes, separated the cities of Carentan and Saint-Côme-du-Mont. Scattered houses and buildings were built along the main road between the two cities. Four bridges stood in a line along the Carentan Causeway and all of them had to be traversed to get from one side to the other. Our lines were dug in the high ground between Saint-Côme-du-Mont and the rivers, but we maintained forward observation posts in the territory between our lines and the rivers. I guess in World War I this would have been known as No-man's-land.

Small groups of Germans still pockmarked this piece of real estate and harassed us whenever they could. But we were no slouches at dishing out this kind of treatment ourselves. A group of us was foraging for wine when we ran into a German machine gun in a house this side of the first bridge. The gun opened up on us, and we hit the ditches on either side of the road. But one trooper, who rode a white cavalry horse and wore a brace of Luger pistols, cowboy fashion, spurred his mount, yelling, "Hi-ho, Silver!" He charged the machine gun with both pistols blazing



while it ripped long bursts around him. Then, wheeling, he dashed back to us. I guess the machine gunner was too busy dodging pistol bullets to get in a well-aimed burst at the trooper. We told him to cut it out or he was going to get it, but he said they couldn't hit the broadside of a barn. He made another run through the hail of bullets, turned, yelled, "Hi-ho, Silver!" again and started back for a third. But this time the gun zeroed in and almost chopped the trooper in half as it shot him out of the saddle. The white horse ran back past us at full gallop.

We tried to get at the machine gun, but it was too well covered and we barely got back with our skins. We finally said to hell with it. We would come back when we had a few more men.

Returning to our positions, we had to take cover from incoming artillery. Some of the foxholes left by the Krauts were elaborate affairs, with sides of woven wicker and concrete tops that rolled back and forth on metal tracks. Shells were slamming into the field now and Screaming Meemies were shredding the air as they plowed their way from the six-barreled mortars to our lines. They never seemed to do great damage but they made the damndest sound, like ten thousand wildcats fighting in a graveyard at midnight. When they hit the ground, they exploded with such force that the concussion bounced men around like peas in a policeman's whistle. Every shell sounded like it was coming right down between your shoulder blades and made you hug the ground until you felt you were part of the dirt itself.

After a while the barrage lifted and we came out of the holes again. Thomas asked if I would like to go with him and Phillips to get some wine in a house down by the Jourdan. He had picked up a big German motorcycle with sidecar, and the three of us climbed on and headed toward the rivers. We pulled up in front of the house that held the German machine gun.

"This house had a machine gun in it," I said as we followed Thomas inside. "They almost killed us."

"I know," said Thomas. "They're still upstairs, so be quiet and don't drop any bottles."

"How come they didn't shoot when we drove up?" I asked.

"Hell, I don't know, maybe they're all asleep."

We each took an armload of bottles of wine and loaded them into the sidecar. A couple of trips filled it. Thomas got on the bike, Phillips climbed on behind him and I sat on the sidecar facing the rear, with my legs wrapped around the spare tire and a tommy gun held in my hands. Just as we started off a couple of Germans appeared at a window and started yelling. I fired a burst at them, but with the bouncing of the bike it was hard to get in a well-aimed shot. They jumped back, then a machine gun protruded and started firing at us. By this time we were racing down the road, zigzagging among large shell holes. It was all I could do to hang on. We finally came back to the company and shared our wine with the other troopers.

Water was hard to get. Even the public pumps that were working could not be trusted to give clean water. The men took to drinking wine, cider and champagne, which seemed to be plentiful in Normandy, in order to conserve water.

By this time some Frenchmen had begun digging large pits to bury the dead cattle and horses. They also buried the German dead. Some of the graves were marked, some weren't. The Frenchmen were looting boots and clothing from the bodies. After all, why should a good pair of boots be buried? We had an outfit called Graves Registration Team: after everything had quieted down and our lines became fairly static, they would move in, gather up all the American dead they could find, transport them back to a central cemetery and give them a decent burial.

I was brewing some K-ration coffee when Colonel Sink arrived. After walking up and down our line of foxholes and staring across the rivers for several minutes, he declared that the troops in Carentan were British.

"Colonel," one of the men said, "we've been watching those troops all day and we know that they're Germans. We've got a large pair of German binoculars and have watched them put machine guns in the houses."

"Well, I've got to see for myself," the colonel said. Then he

picked Liddle, Creed and several other troopers as volunteers to go across with him into the city.

They all piled into a jeep, went down to the Jourdan and found a small boat to cross the marshes and rivers in because the second bridge on the causeway had been destroyed. We watched through field glasses as they rowed to the other side, and with Colonel Sink in the lead they walked in a single file up the main road into enemy lines. Suddenly all hell broke loose. Machine guns opened up on them, along with a hail of rifle fire. The troopers crouched and started running back toward the rivers and our own lines. When they reached the boat, Sink and a couple of troopers got in. Creed and the rest started swimming, diving from time to time to dodge the bullets that were sending small geysers of water up around them. All of them made it, got in the jeep and drove back to where we were waiting.

"Damn it," Colonel Sink said, "I could have sworn there were British over there, and I was going to shake Monty's hand."

Some of the troopers lay on the ground and laughed. The colonel left and headed back toward Saint-Côme-du-Mont.

"I'm just glad we all got out of there in one piece," Creed said.

Someone said, "You've got to hand it to Colonel Sink, though. Most commanders would send a patrol out to find out what they want to know. Colonel Bob won't ask a man to do something he wouldn't do himself. You don't mind even getting shot at a little for someone like that."

The Fourth Infantry Division was moving down the road now and we walked over to watch them go by. Then we settled down for the afternoon and got ready for the coming night. It felt good to know that other troops had moved out in front of us and that the Krauts were on the other side of the swamps.

Later, we got word to move out. The Fourth couldn't make it across the causeway. We would have to take the city of Carentan. It was growing dark by the time we reached the river. Across the black mirrored water stood the houses of Carentan. We knew the dark silhouettes held German soldiers, some of whom we had fought earlier and driven back here. Colonel Cole and two

enlisted men had strung a rope, planking, and a metal grating across the span where the second bridge had once stood. In single file and about twenty feet apart, the entire 506th slid their feet step by step across the flimsy construction, holding on to the rope. Mortar and 88-millimeter shells were landing around the bridge, and machine-gun fire was harassing us. Looking down, I could see the dark swirling water below. If a wounded man fell in he wouldn't stand a chance.

While crossing the fourth bridge, several men were killed and more wounded. Huge iron gates stood across the roadway. One by one we had to squeeze through a small opening, while machine-gun fire sprayed it, sending sparks flying as bullets struck the pavement and metal. Watching the men go through put a funny feeling back in my stomach. This was like a jump, the doorway getting closer and closer. Soon it would be my turn in this game of mass Russian roulette. I was scared, but I kept going. Then it was my turn. Dashing through the opening, I suddenly felt strong. My body reacted faster, and I didn't feel the bumps as I dove head first into the side of the road.

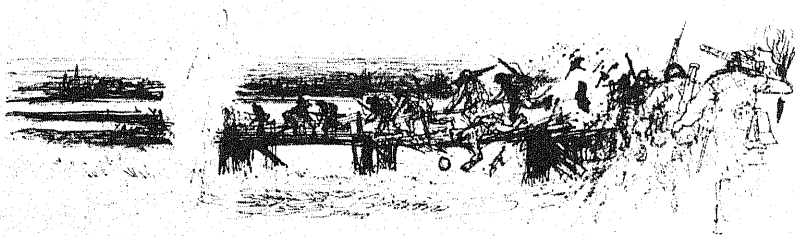
We lined up again in single file, each man holding on to the belt of the man ahead, and started toward Carentan to the right, through the marshes. Most of us put our cigarettes in our helmets to keep them dry, as some of the water was up to our armpits. We moved silently and slowly until we came out on high ground. Even then we held on to each other's belts in the dark. We came to a road lined with houses and spread out along it in hedges and ditches, waiting for the signal to attack.

The first light of dawn appeared, making the air seem colder than it really was. Dew covered our helmets and weapons. The light became stronger. A barn door just across the road slid open. We could see several Germans moving about, some washing their faces in basins of water. Three others were butchering a cow that hung from the rafters.

"Wait till I give the signal," the colonel said. "Then give them hell." The men who had been washing got a fire going and placed a large griddle on it. Word was whispered to get ready for the

attack. Then, just as one of the Germans placed several large steaks on the hot griddle, the colonel gave the word. A volley of gunfire erupted from the hedges. The enemy never knew what hit them. They died where they stood.

We remained in the ditches to see what response our gunfire would bring. Nothing happened. It seemed impossible, but the Germans in the surrounding houses still didn't know that they were being attacked. A motorcycle with sidecar and two German soldiers came down the road. The sun was just glowing red on the horizon, glinting off the windows that still had glass in them. Several troopers opened fire. The cycle driver fell dead and the bike spun into the ditch, spilling the passenger onto the wet grass. He scrambled to his feet and started running back down the road. Dobreck jumped over the hedge, yelling to him to stop, that he wanted to take him prisoner and wouldn't hurt him. The Kraut put on a burst of speed and it looked as though he might escape and warn his people of our presence. We couldn't shoot for fear of hitting Dobreck. Dobreck glanced around with sort of an apologetic look, stretched out his long legs, closed the distance



and smashed the German in the back of the head with the butt of his rifle, killing him. He walked back toward us with his rifle over his shoulder, looking a little dejected.

"I didn't want to hurt that man," he said. "If only he had stopped he would be a prisoner right now and still alive."

We moved out of the hedges toward the houses, and for the first time the enemy opened up on us, and house-to-house fighting started in earnest.

As one of our platoons was running down a side street, a flight of American fighter planes came in low and strafed them. One man was killed, one wounded, and a lieutenant had the musette bag shot off his back. The lieutenant pulled an orange panel from his pocket and stood in the road waving for all he was worth as the planes started their second run. At the last second the lead plane pulled up, waggled his wings and led the rest of his flight toward enemy territory.

We cleared this section of town and set up a good defense in case of counterattack. Returning to the barn, we finished cooking the steaks the Germans had started and settled back for a good breakfast and a good rest.

The order came for us to reassemble. There were some strong enemy positions on the high ground to the rear of town. We made the attack through the houses and out into hedgerow country. Once there the artillery gave us close support. When we got too close to the exploding shells, the artillery spotter relayed orders by radio, and the fire lifted and started working the next hedge. In this leapfrog manner we gained hedgerow after hedgerow until we were in command of the high ground to the right of the city. We made sure that all the enemy had pulled out of this sector, then scattered under hedges to grab a few minutes' rest.

THE FOURTH DIVISION had moved across the river by now and were mopping up enemy stragglers. Sergeant Newton sent me to their area for K rations for our men. On the way back I came to a large rich-looking house. A trooper came out of a cellar door.

"This one's full of champagne," he said. "Help yourself."

My box was only half full of K rations, so I finished filling it with magnums of champagne. Then I stuffed my pockets and picked up as many bottles as I could. My arms felt as though they were pulled out of their sockets by the time I got back to the waiting men. But I didn't drop one bottle. I would have let the K rations go first.

"Where the hell have you been?" "What took you so long?"

These questions ceased when I started handing out the cham-

pagne. Corks popped and foam ran down the men's arms as they lifted the bottles. Man, this was living, just like the Waldorf.

We had finished our jobs and were waiting for the Fourth Division to relieve us. We were only supposed to be in combat seventy-two hours, but the time had run several days over that.

Suddenly Boyd looked up and yelled, "There go some Krauts!"

The Germans, behind a hedge and cutting on an angle toward the road, were bent over low, running with their heads almost touching their knees.

"Let's get them," someone yelled, and we ran down the road to intercept them. We opened fire and four of them fell.

We reached the hedge, jumped over it and started across the field after the Krauts. They had had time to set up a machine gun behind a hedge at the other end, and they opened up on us. We all hit the dirt and returned fire. I saw little geysers of dirt spurt-ing up in the short grass as the bullets came toward us in a fast stitching path. "Look out!" I yelled and rolled to the right. Some bullets nipped my left sleeve. The men behind me rolled to either side and the bullets passed between them without touching a man.

The man in front of me—it was Dobreck—kicked me in the face as he started crawling backward. "Move back," he said. "We'll never make it from here."

We started crawling so fast that we must have looked like a bunch of crawdads. We made it back over the hedge, spread out and started firing on the enemy from behind it.

"Oh God," Dobreck exclaimed, "there's a pillbox behind us."

Looking back, we saw a bunker about forty feet away, so well camouflaged that none of us had noticed it. Dobreck and Robbie ran up its sloping sides and dropped hand grenades down a vent pipe in the top. If there were men inside, they were dead.

Now shells started dropping at the lower end of our hedge. What with the enemy raking machine-gun and rifle fire at us from one side and our own artillery sending high-explosive shells at us from another, we didn't know which way to turn. The deadly barrage rained around us with such force that all we could do was to hug the ground. Smoke, dust and dirt were so

thick that we couldn't see. It was even hard to breathe. Some of the men screamed. They were hit.

"Let's get the hell out of here," someone yelled, and we started running back toward the safety of the houses. Two men carried Robbie between them. Blood poured out of his side like a fountain and splashed down onto the ground.

"How come it's so dark?" he muttered. "Why did the sun go down?" He died before we reached the houses. Several others were dead or severely wounded.

An infantry captain had parked in a jeep near the houses we had captured and was directing artillery fire by radio. Captain Danes told him to stop the fire at once. It was killing our own men.

"There's not much I can do now," the infantry officer said. "I have to go through channels."

"The only place you're going is straight to hell," Captain Danes shouted as he shoved a tommy gun in his throat. "If you don't stop them right now I'm going to blow your head off. Get busy."

The infantry captain grabbed the radio and, with sweat popping out on his face, ordered the shelling to stop. It stopped.

Several of us walked back down the road and entered a large barn. Inside were four huge wooden barrels, each holding several thousand gallons. We wondered what was in them. Wine? Cognac? "I'll find out," one man said, and pumped three rounds into the first barrel. Streams just smaller than a man's finger shot clear across the barn. The man filled his helmet and took a drink.

"Phooey, it's cider," he yelled, spitting the stuff out.

"Cider," echoed Liddle, and his face lit up like a kid's face in a candy store. Filling his helmet, he started drinking, while the other trooper moved down the line tapping one vat after another.

Artillery shells began slamming into the hedges around the barn. We left in a hurry to find better protection. More shells came in, hit the barn square, and splintered wood flew everywhere. The next thing we knew, thousands of gallons of cider were flooding the hedges and ditches. "The dirty rats, the lousy dirty stinking rats," Liddle raged. "They did that on purpose. Just when I've found all the cider I can drink, the Krauts blow it all



*Currahee!*

to hell." He was still grumbling as we walked back toward the rest of the men, who were re-forming in front of the houses.

The captain was bellowing orders. The infantry had bogged down. We would have to act as shock troops again. We moved out past the Fourth's lines and headed through an apple orchard toward the low ground. Passing one foxhole, I saw an infantryman holding his dead buddy in his arms and crying. This puzzled me, and I stopped to ask him what the trouble was.

"They've killed my buddy," he sobbed, with tears streaming down his cheeks. "But he can't be dead, the medics have got to save him."

The man was dead all right, shot through the Adam's apple, and I told the infantryman so. "The only thing you can do for



him now is leave him alone and help kill some of these Krauts."

Looking back, I saw that he was still crying and holding the dead man in his arms. He must be nuts, I thought. Not an hour ago I lost several buddies. I felt bad, but we couldn't sit around and cry about it. We had Germans to kill.

Entering the low ground near Pommerague Farm, we looked up at the high ground with its natural fortresses of hedgerows and undergrowth and wondered how many enemy were up there and what weapons they had. Troopers flattened out to wait. The 501st was supposed to be on our left flank. Nothing was on our right but hedgerow country and the enemy. Word was passed to fix bayonets. We were going over the top. It sounded screwy, like something out of a movie. Bayonets clicked into place. A short wait followed, then the command, "Let's go."

Grenades were thrown; then, grabbing roots, small trees and brush growing out of the side of the bank, we pulled ourselves to the top. Sliding feet first, the troopers went down the other side to do hand-to-hand combat with the enemy. An officer was running up and down yelling, "Get going, get moving over the top!"

Some men had already made it over the top and were in the field. Others with harder places to climb took longer. The attack did get off to a ragged start, but the men were doing their best.

"Get going there!" yelled the officer, looking straight at me.

I was near the top, pulling myself up by the roots and trying to hold my rifle at the same time. "Don't worry, joker. I'm ahead of you, so is everyone else," I told him.

His mouth opened, then closed, then he started to climb too.

Three enemy soldiers were on the ground, groaning. The troopers closest to them dispatched them with bayonets. Other Germans were already dead. The field was fairly large and surrounded with high hedges. There were no trees, ditches or gulleys for cover, just flat open ground. Troopers were running doubled over toward the other end of the field as fast as they could. I was crouched so low it seemed that my knees were, driving on either side of my head. We all fired from the hip as we ran.

We were more than halfway across when the enemy opened up

on us with rifle, machine gun, mortar and 88-millimeter shells. It was impossible to go back or to either side. We had to take the shortest route, straight into the enemy fire, to try and reach the safety of the hedge in front of us. The one that held the enemy. Large numbers of men were being killed and horribly maimed.

Mortar shells blanketed the field. At least six machine guns were cross-firing on us and that terrible 88 was shredding everything in sight. Bounding Bettys leaped into the air to sow their seeds of death in those who disturbed them. These were ingenious little devices of the enemy. When a man stepped on one, it would spring into the air and explode about belly high, sending steel balls in all directions. They were very effective; men were being torn almost in half by them. We kept running straight at the enemy. It was like a dream—or like a nightmare. We were running for all we were worth, but the hedge at the end of the field seemed as far away as before.

Glancing around at my comrades to draw courage and strength from their presence, I saw that the field was being littered with our dead. A trooper in front of me was hit in the chest by an 88 shell. His body disappeared from the waist up, his legs and hips, with belt, canteen and entrenching tool still on, taking three more steps, then falling. But others had gained the hedge and were lobbing grenades over it. We had been yelling and screaming all the way. The Germans were falling back. But the next hedge was a duplicate of the first. Each time we gained a hedge, the enemy left a delaying force and pulled back to the next one. I don't know how many hedges we crossed, but they seemed endless. Our attack finally slowed and came to a stop. We had to reorganize before going deeper into enemy territory.

Phillips, Benson and I took cover by a hedge. Suddenly a strange smell came to our noses and wisps of a funny-looking smoke crept over the hedge from our left. It clung close to the ground and moved slowly toward us. Phillips looked at me, his eyes round and wide. "Gas," he exclaimed. "What'll we do now?"

"Nothing," I said. "Just stay here and die, I guess. I wish I had my gas mask now."

"So do I," said Phillips and Benson together.

They had been the first things we had thrown away. I would have traded anything for one of the thousands that lay scattered between the beach and here. The smoke reached us. At first I held my breath, but then realized that I couldn't do that for very long and took a deep breath, figuring to get it over with quickly. Nothing happened. The three of us looked at each other to see if we had turned green or something. But everything was normal.

"It was just smoke," Phillips said. (Later I found that the smoke was laid down by our own artillery.)

The bushes up front rustled and moved.

"Stay here," I told the other men. "I'll go look," and I crawled forward toward the spot. In these thick hedges it was almost impossible to tell if an enemy were only a foot away. The leaves above me moved, parted, and there stood a German with a potato masher in his hand. The cord had already been pulled from



the handle. With a movement of the wrist he flipped the grenade, as though tossing away an empty beer bottle, and went backward through the hedge, out of sight. The whole thing had happened in a fraction of a moment, faster than I could bring my rifle up to fire. The grenade landed in front of me. I dropped my rifle and leaped forward to grab the grenade and throw it after him. I was still in midair with the potato masher just inches from my fingertips when the damned thing went off.

A ball of orange fire flashed in front of my eyes, thousands of

small sandlike particles sprayed me, while a blast of heat, real furnace heat, hit me full in the face. My feet shot up past my eyes. In that last moment I didn't know whether they were still hooked on to my legs or not. Then total blackness.

CONSCIOUSNESS came back to me and I looked around to see that I was completely alone. Shells were exploding in the field, tracers lancing back and forth, but there was no sound. It was like watching a silent movie. I was deaf. Troopers moved in the hedge across the field to my right. Checking for injuries, I found that other than not being able to hear I seemed to be O.K. It was a miracle being alive. I have heard that a person can be just the right place in an explosion and live. A foot closer or farther away and he is killed instantly. I must have been in the right spot.

Picking up my rifle and making my way across the field through small-arms and shell fire, I joined the other men in the far right hedge. Had I been able to hear the incoming shells and the crackling of bullets, I doubt that I would have attempted to cross that field. I could see the artillery and mortar shells erupting around me and feel their explosions along with the soft slapping of air on my face as bullets passed close by.

The Germans were attacking us from this right flank. A Kraut tank moved into view to my left. A trooper fired a bazooka and struck it in the side. The turret swiveled and the 88 fired point-blank into the hedge where the trooper was lying. The exploding shell knocked him rolling end over end out of the hedge. He got to his hands and knees, shook his head, stood up, looked around, then started running. I thought he was running away from the fight, but he only picked up his helmet from where it had been blasted, put it on and returned to his position. A few moments later another bazooka shell rocketed from the hedge, struck the tank in the ribs again, and this time the tank exploded with such force that I was lifted several inches from the ground.

Passing the bazooka, I went through a small white gate in the hedge and found myself on a road. In the ditch on the other side a lieutenant knelt, studying a map. Rushing over to him, I ex-

plained about my ears, then filled him in on the positions of the troops to the right so his men wouldn't fire in that direction. He scribbled a note that this was the right flank of the 501st, that he didn't know where the 506th was unless it was up ahead. He wrote that he wanted me to go back to the other men and tell them of his positions so they could coordinate an attack.

I dashed back across the road, waited until not too many shells were exploding in the field, then started through the gate. Suddenly the gate spun around me several times, as though I were standing in the center of a merry-go-round. At the same time it felt as though a sledgehammer had struck me in the right arm and a shock like electricity flashed through my entire body. The ground came up hard and hit me several times before I rolled into the ditch and lay on my back. My rifle lay against the bank. I tried to reach for it, but my right arm wouldn't move. Taking my left hand and pulling my right arm up in front of me, I could see the hole in one side of my sleeve and another in the other side, where something had passed clear through my forearm.

A dull throb came from my right side and I knew that a bullet or shell fragment had entered my belly. I thought of the many rabbits I had killed with a shotgun and how their guts had been chopped to pieces by the shot. I could picture my guts like someone had gone through them with an eggbeater. I took my knife and cut the sleeve open. I was shocked to see that a chunk of flesh was missing from my arm. I could lay four fingers against the bone. A severed end of an artery hung about four inches out of the wound, but no blood was coming from it. I poured sulfa powder in the wound, swallowed sulfa pills, wrapped a bandage on as best I could, and drank the water I had been saving.

Looking up, I saw a medic bending over me, his lips moving in silent words. I told him to check my belly as I thought it was shot up pretty bad. He pulled my clothes apart, laughed and showed me there was nothing there but a big bruise. What a relief!

Stripping off my harness and rifle belt, I felt something hot against the skin of my hip and found it was a piece of shrapnel. It had passed through my right arm, cut through eight rounds of

rifle ammo in my belt and out through my jump suit, ODs and two belts. But for the rifle ammo absorbing the impact, I think the shell fragment would have gone clear through my belly.

A medic jeep stopped on the road and the first medic helped me into it. We picked up four badly wounded men on the way. They were strapped to stretchers, two on the hood and two on the back. I sat next to the driver. The medic had two grenades in his shirt pocket, while I had my .45 and P-38 in holsters under my jump jacket. After seeing one medic jeep shot to ribbons, I didn't want to go down without a fighting chance. We made the run toward the bridges amid shell and machine-gun bursts. The driver hugged the steering wheel so close that his eyes were level with the hood. It was dark as we neared the bridges.

The steel gates had been removed, and a heavier temporary bridge had been built in place of the rope and plank we had used in getting over here. It was a clear run across the rivers to the other side. The driver stopped back a ways from the bridges, motioned for me to hold on, then tromped it to the floor and the jeep shot forward. The Krauts must have heard the engine, for artillery shells started landing. Hearing had returned to my left ear, so that I could hear the shells coming in now. We made it O.K., passed the house where Thomas, Phillips and I had gotten the wine, and kept on going.

We must have traveled a dozen miles before coming to a group of large tents painted with red crosses and lit up with searchlights. Doctors were operating in almost every tent. Nurses were moving about, some with large pots of black coffee. These doctors and nurses had been working without sleep for three and four days. I don't know how many men owe their lives to these hard-driving people.

A young doctor with haggard features had just finished at an operating table. He pulled his mask down, wiped his forehead with the back of his hand and hurried toward us.

"Bring the badly wounded in first," he ordered, and the stretcher cases were taken inside.

I was put in a ward with other walking wounded and fell into

a deep sleep on a canvas cot. It was morning when I awoke. They gave us something to eat, and later a large group of us were moved to the beach and loaded onto LSTs. The sailors told us we would have to wait until the tide came in before we could pull off and sail for England. Walking up to the deck, I gazed back at Utah Beach and the high ground overlooking it. Some of the German pillboxes were made to look just like summer cottages, painted shutters and all. I noticed other pillboxes, gun emplacements and strong points on and behind the beaches. The men of the Fourth and other units must have had a hard time fighting their way through these fortifications.

About fifty yards from the edge of the water was a puddle about twenty-five feet in diameter, and sticking up out of the center was the turret of a Sherman tank. Other tanks were in shallow water, their canvas water wings torn and shredded. These tanks were supposed to swim ashore with the aid of rubberized canvas walls built up around the deck. Bullets and high waves had torn the canvas apart. Few, if any, had made it.

Returning below deck, I was assigned a place next to several wounded Germans. The one next to me had been machine-gunned through the legs and was in a cast from his waist down. There were no cots. We lay on the floor or leaned against the walls. The badly wounded lay in the center of the floor. A wire stretched the length of the hold, bottles of plasma and glucose hanging from it with long rubber tubes leading to the patients.

Night came and with it the Stuka dive bombers. They droned about us in the dark like a bunch of mosquitoes looking for their prey. Suddenly several of them started screaming their way down. They had found us. The ship rocked gently, then violently as the bombs came closer. One bomb dropped between our ship and the next and for a moment I thought we would turn over. The Kraut next to me spoke. "Breaks the boat, I can't swim."

"That's too bad," I told him. "With those casts on your legs you can walk on the bottom till you get to shore. You should have thought of things like this before you started the war."

The mad screaming of the dive bombers finally stopped and I



fell asleep. I woke up when the ship started moving. We weren't allowed above deck now, so I moved about, helping the ones who were wounded so badly they couldn't help themselves.

THE TRIP back across the Channel was smooth and uneventful, and for those of us who were not seriously wounded it was almost like a pleasure cruise. Arriving in England, we came to a stop bow first against the docks; the huge bow doors opened, the ramp was let down and the walking wounded left first. English people lined the water's edge. They waved to us, said encouraging things, and some had tears streaming down their cheeks.

We were taken first to makeshift hospitals, where some of us spent a day or two, then we were shipped to regular hospitals. Nurses kept giving me shots and pills every time I turned around. At last I walked into the 216 General Hospital, just outside Coventry, and was shown to a bed in a ward filled with noncombat patients.

A ward boy told me to get undressed and ready to take a bath. It must have been around the seventeenth or eighteenth of June, and I still hadn't washed since we made the jump. My jump suit was torn and grimy, I needed a shave and still wore my fire-blackened helmet. The ward boy cut my jacket and shirt from me and helped me off with the rest of my clothes. He didn't touch the bandage. It was the one I had put on when I was hit.

Two doctors came in followed by a nurse with a tray of instruments and bandages. They cut the old bandage off, and when they pulled it from the clotted wound the blood poured like water from a fountain. It was the first time it had really bled. After a thorough examination they rebandaged the arm, told me they would be able to fix it just like new, and left.

A patient in another bed asked me if I had taken part in the invasion.

"Yes," I answered.

"Here," he said, and threw me an orange.

I didn't want to take the man's last orange, but he insisted and said that he wished it were more. He said that I was the first com-

bat man he had ever met. All of the men in that ward treated me like a king. They were a good bunch of Joes.

I visited a trooper in another ward. He was in a cast from the waist down. "I guess you won't be jumping for a while," I said.

"Hell no. I can't even turn over; it takes four nurses to do it."

The doctors treated my ears every day, and I could soon hear pretty well. They said it would be just a matter of time and they would be as good as new.

On the fourth day my doctor brought in the specialist who would do the operating. They didn't give me any breakfast that day, then no lunch. I was just getting used to eating again and now they were trying to starve me to death. Later that afternoon a nurse gave me a shot. Then the ward boy wheeled in a table and helped me on it for the trip to the operating room.

"Wait a minute," I told him, "there's something I've got to get from my bed," and I recovered the German pistol, which I had secreted when I first arrived. I wasn't going to hand that in to anybody. The ward boy's mouth opened, but he said nothing and wheeled me into the operating room.

The three nurses asked me all sorts of questions while they worked. All three were from Detroit. At least that's what they said. They laughed when I asked them if they knew where Rouge Park was. One of them said she could only find her way around Rouge Park at night. This seemed hilariously funny to me and I laughed uncontrollably even when they tied my arms to boards sticking out from the sides of the operating table. The doctor came over and talked to me a little. Then, when he pulled my sheet down to my waist, there lay the pistol. I told him it was the only souvenir I had managed to keep from combat. He stood there looking at me for a moment, then returned to his instrument tray.

A nurse put a needle in my left arm. It was attached to a rubber hose and a bottle hanging from a stand. She told me to count from ten to one. I got to eight and went under. That was about six in the evening.

When I awoke it was morning. I was back in my own bed and

everyone was eating breakfast. I felt something slide from my belly, and, looking under the sheet, saw the German pistol. The doctor had made sure I still had it.

"Where's my chow?" I asked the ward boy.

"You don't get any this morning," he said.

"Like hell I don't," and getting up I started for the mess hall at the other end of the hospital. The floor didn't want to stay still. I staggered down the main hall and ran smack into the nurse on duty in my ward.

"Get back in bed," she ordered.

"Not till I get something to eat."

After trying to wrestle me back into bed, she finally promised to get me a tray if I would return to bed and behave. She brought me scrambled eggs, bacon, toast and coffee.

On their daily inspection tour the medics changed my bandage and swabbed out the fluid that formed in the wound between the stitches. They told me that was new flesh growing in the wound and they cleaned it out every day to allow it to heal from the inside out and not leave a large indentation in my arm.

The Fourth of July rolled around. That night we watched fireworks and were served ice cream on the lawn outside the building. A few days later, dressed in Class A uniforms, a group of us stood at attention before the flag in front of the hospital and received our Purple Hearts. After the ceremony I mailed mine home.

A few days later the doctor called me into his office and looked the scar over closely. He handed me a pair of scissors and told me to cut and pull the stitches. I did the first one gingerly. It didn't hurt, so I went through the rest like an old pro.

After two days they gave me traveling papers, ration card and meal ticket, took me to the rail station, wished me luck and told me to return to my base camp. At Aldbourne, I walked through the village square. A few civilians turned to look at me. I was the first of the outfit to return.

I stood for a long time in the courtyard. It was deserted. No noise, no troopers hustling about, no one doing close-order drill. For the first time in many months I felt a deep loneliness. Open-

ing the door of Stable 13 was like opening the door of a tomb. Memories flooded my mind. I wondered how many men were still alive. The only thing to do was to keep busy, so I gathered up all my dirty laundry, went to the washhouse and scrubbed everything clean. Returning to the stable, I ate some fish-and-chips purchased earlier in town and went to bed.

Next morning when I awoke the sun was shining bright and a great racket came from the center of town. It was the outfit. The men had come back. Pulling on my ODs, I ran toward the gate. They came running, yelling and laughing like a bunch of kids on a picnic. Phillips, Benson, Liddle, many others, all of them laughing. They were home. My buddies saw me and stopped. Phillips' mouth opened. Finally he said, "You're dead, we saw your body."

I told them how I was wounded, said that I had arrived here yesterday and was very much alive. Back in the barracks they told me that after they had seen me hit with the grenade they had gone on through with the attack. A hell of a battle took place near the Carentan road. They held their ground and the Germans fell back. This had been their last big fight. Afterward, they had wondered if I were really dead or just wounded, and had returned to what they thought was the spot where I had fallen. They had found a body that looked like me and I was officially reported killed in action. A telegram was being prepared to be sent to my parents. Captain Danes told me to take a jeep, go to regimental headquarters and stop the telegram. At Littlecote Manor I had to sign three copies of a statement saying that I was still alive. They wouldn't just take my word for it.

Returning to the barracks, I sat with my buddies and we talked. We talked of many things that night in Stable 13. Of those who were dead, wounded or still missing. Some of the wounded had been sent back to the States and some would heal and come back to the outfit as I had done, to make other missions. Some of the missing would remain missing forever, their whereabouts known only to God. We talked of the bayonet attack near Pommerague Farm. So many men died there charging into the heavy firing that we came to call this place Bloody Gulch.

A couple of days after the outfit had returned we marched to regimental headquarters, and there, with our outfit on the right side and the troop carrier command on the left, General Ike delivered a speech complimenting us on our execution of orders and the taking of all objectives on or before the given deadline. After it we held formal ceremonies honoring our dead. Many of them had died during the jump on D Day. The troop carrier command pulled a big snafu in Normandy, but many times since then they have made up for it. I have witnessed pilots holding their crippled planes on course while the troops cleared out, then die in the flaming wreckage. We've got the greatest air corps in the world, bar none, but the men are only human, like ourselves, and should be allowed one mistake.

We returned to camp and received nine days' furlough, after which we settled down to build our strength back to combat readiness. We were green before Normandy, but we had been baptized in fire and were ready and able to take on anything the Nazi could throw at us. We had captured and held all the ground from Ravenoville to Poupeville, from Herbert to and including Carentan—just about everything behind the Utah beachhead. For its part in this, the 101st Airborne was the first entire division to receive the Presidential Unit Citation.

We had other missions, and by the time the war was over the 506th was to suffer over 350 percent casualties. Every stable in A Company, with one exception, was to have men missing, either killed or wounded. The exception was Stable 13, occupied by Phillips, Benson, Liddle and myself. It was the only one to have all its men return home after combat.



Donald Burgett today:  
*"a happy, free-lance roofer"*



DONALD BURGETT was discharged from the 101st Airborne in December 1945 and went home to Detroit. He took flight training on the GI Bill with the idea of becoming a bush pilot in Alaska, but changed his mind and got a job with a wrecking company, demolishing buildings with a 4700-pound breaker ball. "I quit," he says, "after a three-story brick wall collapsed over my crane." He went in for roofing houses, married and settled down. Now he has five children and is "a happy free-lance roofer."

Although he says he "hardly ever wrote a letter to Mother" during the war, he talked about his experiences constantly after he came home. A friend suggested he put it all down on paper. He tried to write it out longhand, found he couldn't and so traded an aqualung for an old typewriter.

Mrs. Burgett says she racked her brain to think of ways to keep the youngsters quiet while their father worked at a homemade desk in the bedroom. "I can't honestly say I thought Don would sell his book," she recalls, "but it seemed something he had to get out of his system."

He says, "Maybe it was just my part in the war, but think what we'd give today for an eyewitness account of Gettysburg written by a foot soldier!"

At forty-two, Donald Burgett is a mild-mannered, soft-spoken man. It is difficult to imagine that he fought from France to Austria, that he lived through a time when every day was one of horror, that he once parachuted onto a dew-drenched field to "stand alone" in the opening hours of D Day.

Her crippled leg and her overbearing family were all the problems Deborah Dainton felt she needed. Men, she had decided, were not for her. With a good job at a famous London auction house, she was content with life the way it was.

Certainly the last thing she wanted was to fall in love with a struggling young artist. "I should have said, 'Go away and stop bothering me!'" she told herself when Leigh Hartley pressed his attentions on her. "But after all, the poor fellow didn't mean any harm."

Harm, however, was just what Leigh did mean. He and his peculiar friends: the vulgar Ted Sandymount and smooth, too friendly Mr. Foil.

So when Deborah exchanged her comfortable, humdrum existence for a heady affair in London's dockland, she found herself caught up in a crime so subtle that only afterwards did she fully recognize it for what it was.

With masterful skill, the author of *Marnie* and *The Sleeping Partner* has woven the frailties of human nature into a chilling and memorable tale of suspense.



## CHAPTER I

THE MAN had been eyeing me most of the way home, and left the bus at the same stop; but as soon as I got off, leaning on my stick, he lost interest and walked away, hunching his shoulders against the disappointment and rain. I walked home, up Holly Hill, the wind beating against my back and legs. The road glimmered like wet polythene. It would soon be dark.

We lived in a big, square early-Edwardian house, built without taste, but made to last. It had too many steps up to the front door, an iron gate and an old streetlamp outside. This showed up my father's brass plate which read: J. DOUGLAS DAINTON, M.R.C.S., L.R.C.P. Both my parents were doctors.

I opened the front door with my key and went in. My parents were at home, and supper was nearly over. We always ate in the kitchen, a long trainlike room, with plenty of space for cooking at one end and eating at the other. It had most of the latest gadgets, for Erica, my mother, loved gadgets: mixers, washing-up machines, infrared grills, electric slicers, openers and coffee mills. Cellophaned down one wall was a selection of paintings we had done as children. My elder sister Sarah's were the most primitive and therefore the most prized.



When I got in, my father was spreading cheese on a Ryvita biscuit. Propped against a toast rack was a new book by a psychiatrist. He looked up, smiled at me clinically, and remarked that I was wet. Dr. Erica Dainton was stirring her coffee and reading an egghead paperback. She pushed her glasses up her nose and said, "You're late. Have you been to a party?"

It was her expectation that somehow I was going to break out into a gay life of my own.

"No, I had some work to finish. Is there anything left?"

"Of course. But it'll be cold."

I went to the stove, helped myself to the congealed stew, and began to eat. My mother said, "Did you come by tube?"

"No. Bus. It's almost as easy."

"But so much longer, my dear, when you're late."

"I like it better." She knew that I didn't like confined places, tunnels, compartments, closets, caves.

"Sarah rang up to speak to you. She said she'd ring again."

That rather exhausted the conversation. I flipped through the evening paper. Sotheby's, the auctioneers, a rival to the firm I worked for, were in the news with seven thousand pounds paid for a Meissen tea and coffee service. There had been a murder in Kensington. Rain was forecast for the last week in April.

The telephone rang in the hall.

"Deborah," said the voice of my elder sister when I lifted the receiver, "I'm giving a party tomorrow, just a couple of dozen people—eight o'clock. Any hopes?"

"Well . . . thanks." I stared at myself in the dim hall mirror. The rain had made rats' tails of my hair. I looked an absolute fright. "Shall I know anybody?"

"Well, there's me and Arabella. Your sisters."

I bit at some skin round my thumbnail.

"Well?" she said impatiently.

"Thank you, darling. I'd adore to come."

I hung up. Late invitation for a party—someone fallen sick? No. Give Sarah credit: if she'd wanted me as a stopgap she would have said so. Pity there always had to be this thing be-

tween me and my family. They trying to be nice, me on guard. I went back into the kitchen, to my father and mother.

My father at this time was fifty-eight, but I don't think he looked it. He was bald, otherwise he would have been very handsome, and clean-looking, with a clear complexion, a fine profile and smiling, frank blue eyes. He gave the impression of shining candor. If there had been warmth in his eyes he would have looked a saint. But there wasn't warmth, not much more than the professional man could afford to give off to each patient, the same smooth sympathy whether you had indigestion or angina. You could hardly imagine him not in command of a situation.

When the National Health Service came in, my parents were young, with a growing family, and practicing together. It was against Erica's principles to give up her profession to raise children. "Of course I adore children," I'd heard her say, "but they have to be kept in proportion to one's life. Otherwise at fifty you're a dead letter. It's not civilized." To call a thing not civilized was my mother's most stringent criticism.

Douglas had taken one look at the new medical regime and gone on with a tiny but rich private practice. Erica, reacting the opposite way, had gone into partnership with three women doctors in a less prosperous part of Hampstead: no private patients and no nonsense about personal relationships between doctor and patient. She was tall and good-looking, with a fresh complexion and curly gray hair. But her big brown eyes had narrowed with having to make constant authoritative decisions, giving her a bossy look.

They both belonged to the Hampstead intelligentsia. They believed in asepsis, Freud, experimental theater, separate holidays, and the use of Christian names between parents and children. I'm not suggesting these things are either right or wrong; I'm only trying to describe my home as it was, so that what happened to me can be seen against its proper background. Perhaps some people will see a connection.

But in a sense, my father and mother were old-fashioned. After all they had stayed married for twenty-nine years. They

never drank to excess, were never in debt. They'd reared three daughters, all of whom would soon be self-supporting. They were highly successful and performed a valuable service for the community. If they had any failure to irk them, it was I. I suppose I was a reflection on their professional competence.

MY SISTER Sarah, a brilliant young woman, intended to specialize in gynecology. She was tall (I always feel a dwarf in my family, although I am above average height), and very good to look at, with those blue eyes in which even the whites seem to take the color. She always had some young man about her, but the linkup never seemed to last. Maybe she was too high spirited. There was so much in life apart from love.

My younger sister, Arabella, was twenty and reading medicine at London University. She had a lovely figure and sexy blond hair hiding one side of her face. If she completed her studies without getting into trouble with some man—which seemed unlikely—she would probably go into research.

When I got to the flat in Ennismore Gardens which Sarah shared with a girl called Virginia, about half a dozen people were in the sitting room, talking and drinking happily. Sarah introduced me to a man named Philip, then went to answer the door, asking me to help Arabella pour the drinks. The room began to fill up, and Arabella and I were kept pretty busy.

The big bedroom was converted into a dining room for the night, and just as we were about to go in and eat, two late arrivals came. One was David Hambro, a young surgeon I'd seen before. The other was a man called Leigh Hartley.

When you get to know someone very well it's often hard to remember first impressions. I remember his curly hair, his common voice, his husky physique, his look of tormented vigor. He was not tall, but somehow he wasn't overlooked by taller men. He had heavy eyelids, a nose too narrow for the broad face, a big, sensitive mouth, and teeth as white as high-gloss paint. Not handsome. But it was a face that meant quite a lot in a world where so many are anonymous.

The first words he said to me were, "Burnt umber."

I stared at him.

"Your hair," he explained. "You Sarah's sister?"

"Yes."

"Crikey, three sisters, all so attractive!"

"Can I get you a drink?" I said.

"Sure. Pour me half a glass of water, then a dash of Scotch."

While I did this he looked me over, and I was angry with Sarah for putting me behind the drinks table where I couldn't properly be seen. "Seriously," he said, "I think your hair's great. It shines, you know. What's your name?"

"Deborah."

"Mine's Leigh Hartley. You a doctor?"

"No. I work in the West End."

"The only unmedical Dainton, eh? Thank God. I'm scared of women doctors."

"Why?"

"They're somehow the wrong sex for the job."

Sarah was leading the way into the bedroom for supper. I said, "Your ideas are a bit Victorian, aren't they?"

"Maybe. But why blame the poor old Queen? There weren't any women doctors in Edward's day, or the earlier Georges or—"

"They burned them before that," I said. I picked up my stick. "Supper's ready."

"Can I sit with you, d'you think?"

I smiled. "No. I have to help." I limped beside him to the bedroom door. "In there."

He pretended not to notice my limp, nodded and slipped in.

Actually I didn't help much. It's hard for me to get up and down in a hurry. After passing a few things I grabbed a plate, and two people made room for me to sit between them on a bed. Leigh Hartley sat at the dressing table, talking to a dark girl, but every now and then he turned towards me. Once I met his look.

We had vichyssoise, followed by *jambon à la crème*. Virginia fancied her foreign menus. It was very good. The man next to me and the man on the opposite bed, both doctors, were dis-

cussing the opening of a new ward. The man on my other side wanted to tell me about his skiing holiday in Norway. I sat there saying yes and no.

Supper finished about eleven, and everyone was very jolly and talkative. In the sitting room somebody found me a chair, and Leigh Hartley edged over to sit on a settee nearby. "Remember me?" he said. "I'm that fresh guy who admired your hair."

I didn't reply, and he said, "I suppose the old cold shoulder is the easiest way of keeping wolves like me at bay."

I met his eyes. They were absolutely clear gray. "I haven't any trouble usually. After the first howl, they don't come after me."

He continued to look. "Because you're lame, you mean?"

Most people weren't quite so tactless. I said, "It could be," and turned to David Hambro, who was squatting on a cushion. Presently Leigh Hartley got up and crossed the room. He probably hadn't intended to be offensive; you shouldn't victimize a man for speaking the truth. . . .

He came back carrying two glasses. "I've brought you a refill."

"Thanks, but I'm fine with what I've got."

"O.K., I'll drink them both."

One or two couples began to dance, and David Hambro asked Arabella. Hartley sat down on the cushion and looked up at me. "I'm not really a wolf, you know. Haven't the time."

I smiled thoughtfully.

He said, "Well, stone the crows, but you *are* beautiful. Maybe it's a bore to you, but think of the kick it gives other people."

"Why haven't you the time?" I asked.

"I paint." He bit it off, like biting the end off a cigar.

"Oh, I see. That explains the burnt umber."

"Well, yes. And it explains me, see. I'm the uncouth type. Haven't had time to pick up the graces of society."

I looked at his hands; they were broad and stubby, more suited to an engineer. His clothes were quite good but overstyled. A few people were going now. Two of them came to say good night to me. The music was dreamy, beat stuff suitable for amorous couples and a crowded floor. I wished I hadn't come. I wished Sarah

wouldn't ask me. She did it out of a loving heart, trying to draw me into the circle of her friends, and always it was a failure.

"Are you a good painter?"

"No. I'm a good draftsman. But that isn't enough."

That was original anyway. "You're modest."

"No—clear-sighted."

"In that case, why do you go on with it?"

He said, "Why do you go on breathing?"

"Do you sell your paintings?"

"One or two. I've a bit of lolly from an aunt. It just about keeps me above the famine level. Can I take you home?"

"Thanks, but I'm spending the night here."

"You don't live with Sarah—not normally, I mean?"

"No, with my parents in Hampstead."

"Will you come out some evening with me?"

"... I don't go out much. I get home late most evenings."

"A Sunday then. I'll ring you."

When he rang, I could be out. He said, "What do you do? You've got a different face from your sisters. You musical?"

"No."

"They've got long faces really. Modern faces. Yours is oval, it's nineteenth-century. Very out of date."

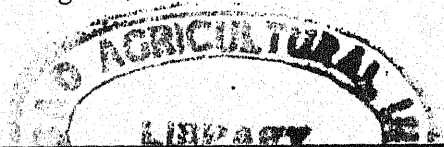
"Thank you."

"No. It's got something. It's sensitive, and *gentle*. You *look* romantic, even though underneath you may be—"

I didn't learn what he thought I might be underneath. I slid away into the kitchen and saw no more of him that night.

## CHAPTER II

WHEN I LEFT school, the one thing I was certain I wouldn't go into was medicine. I had acquired a taste for antiquities while staying in France with an uncle who was an archaeologist, so, at nineteen, I applied for a job at Whittington's, auctioneers of art objects, antiques and jewelry.



It was a time when employment by the big auction houses was becoming fashionable; even debts tried for jobs at Whittington's or Sotheby's or Christie's. But there were certain things in my favor. By now I knew quite a lot about early art. And John Hallows, the director who interviewed me, must have reasoned that it was unlikely I should get married—a virtue that isn't to be sneezed at. He engaged me as a receptionist-clerk.

After two years I was put in the antiquities department, and then transferred to porcelain, which interested me most. A year later I became a cataloguer, and now I was right hand to Maurice Mills, who ran the department.

THE WEDNESDAY following Sarah's party, Leigh rang me after I'd got home from work. "Look," he said, "you free this Sunday? I'm a member of the Seven Arts Club and we have a film show—"

"Sorry," I said. "I'm already booked up."

"Oh." He sounded really disappointed. "Pity. It's the Picasso film, the old boy in action. People rave about it. We wouldn't need to get there till nine. What hopes?"

"No hopes. Sorry. I must ring off. I left a kettle on."

"O.K. . . . Deborah, when is your next free Sunday?"

Damn the man. "Well . . . perhaps next month."

"As long as that? Anyway, I'll ring again."

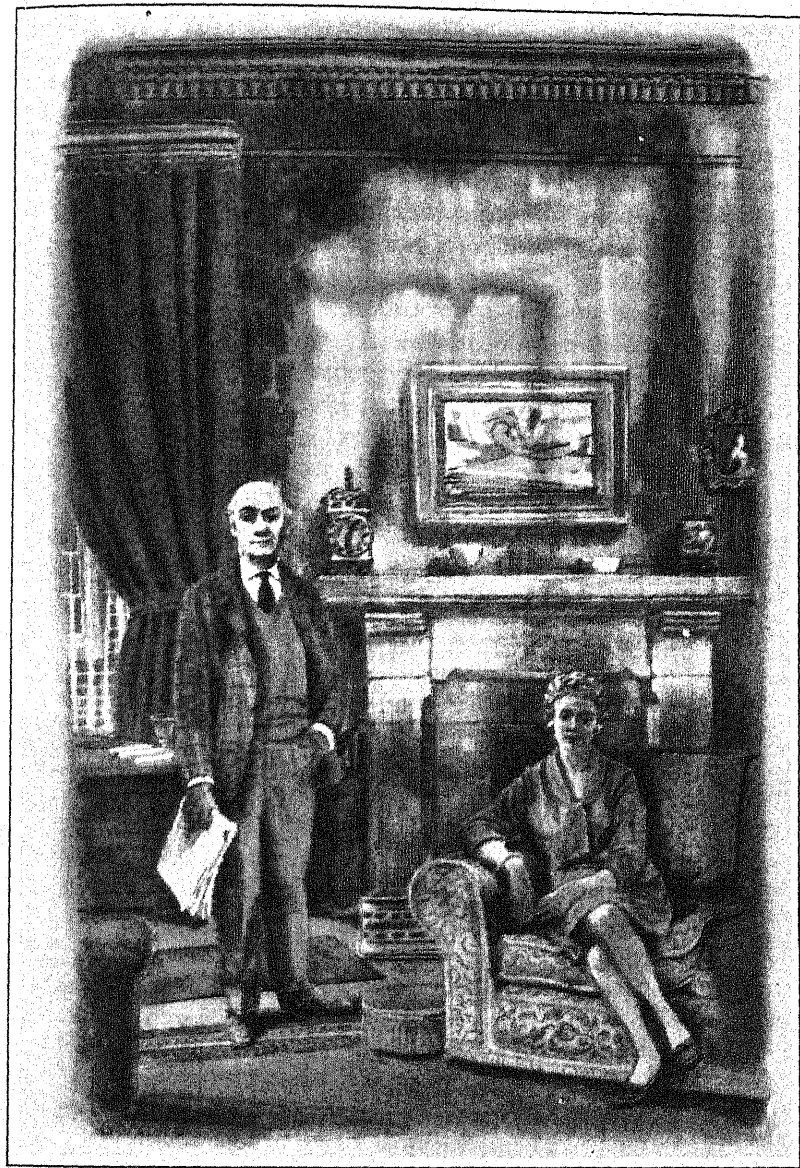
"Yes, all right. Good-by."

In the drawing room my mother had been playing the piano. It was a cheerless room, with two small Hamadan rugs on the polished oak floor. The Bluethner six-foot grand piano was in black veneer. There were three framed reproductions of abstract paintings, three chairs, an uncomfortable settee, and that was about all. Douglas said that if one's intellect was worthwhile, that furnished any room; people cluttered their rooms as they cluttered their minds. (Yet I collected porcelain and Sarah collected old silver. Arabella only collected men.)

Erica said, "Was it for you?"

"Yes. Somebody I met at Sarah's party."

"Inviting you out?"





"No. They wanted an address."

Up in my bedroom I had a moment's regret. Heaven help me, it couldn't have hurt to go out with a man. And I could surely handle Leigh Hartley, in the unlikely event of his needing to be handled. (A few men had been interested in me, but in most cases the sight of a withered leg put them off.)

He rang me the following Monday evening and told me that the club had managed to get the Picasso film again for next Sunday. Could I come?

I should have said, "Go away and stop bothering me!" But after all, the poor fellow didn't mean any harm. So I found myself agreeing to meet him at the Hampstead underground at eight thirty. He would have come to fetch me, but I couldn't bear the speculative eyes of my parents.

When I got to the meeting place he was waiting beside a very small red sports car. His face lit up when he saw me. He was younger than I remembered, probably *years* younger than I was. Crikey, he must *still* find me attractive, I thought. Odd, was he a "case"? But give him his due—he was generous and warm. Pity about his voice—a sort of flat cockney, without the accent. And those clothes.

"Let me take your stick. Mind your coat—this door has to be *slammed*. Hold your breath and we'll see if it starts."

The show was in a little cinema in Wardour Street. When it was over we went to a café and had coffee and talked.

He said, "You didn't want to come out with me, did you?"

I picked at a flake of skin on my finger. "Not particularly. Maybe I'm a bit rude. It isn't that I intend to be."

"Good. I'm glad to know it."

I said carefully, "I enjoyed the film, it was fun . . . I get a great deal of fun out of life, but it isn't always quite the *same* fun as other people's."

"D'you mean because you're lame?"

I resented this. "As you say. But I'm quite happy, thanks."

He thrust out his bottom lip and sucked at his coffee. "O.K., O.K. You're happy. That's fine. But I'm trying to sort this out. If

you wanted to see the film, why did you 'not particularly' want to see it with me? Have I got smallpox?"

I stared past him at a dark young man who was eyeing me.

"What's the matter?" Leigh said. "Why are you lame?"

"It's a fine evening, isn't it?"

"Oh, I get the danger signals. Tell me just one thing. Why does it make you so different? Maybe you're not good at ballet or skiing. Nor are seven million other girls. Why has your fun got to differ? I'm interested, Deborah."

The jukebox was thumping out one of last year's pop songs.

"If you're white," I said, "why want to be brown? If you're brown, why want to be white? It's a question of looking the facts of life in the face."

We were silent for a while. Then he said: "What's your work?" I told him.

"Hm. I thought you were shy, but you must have to deal with people all day long."

"Oh, yes, but that's in the course of business."

"How about treating me as if I was in the course of business?"

I laughed. "What have you got to sell?"

"Myself."

We looked at each other. "*Make no mistake*," said the disc, "*you gotta be certain in love. No mistake, no mista-a-ake.*"

I said, "It's nearly eleven thirty. I must go."

"You'll come out again?"

"Find me another Picasso and I will."

"We'll find something. D'you have a lot of friends?"

"Oh, yes, a lot."

"How about including me in?"

"But of course."

He blew out a breath. "You said that in a damned party voice that meant nothing at all. I reckon I know when I'm beat."

Something moved me to say, "Sorry."

"No, no, if that's the way you feel, it's the way you feel."

We drove back to Hampstead in a sort of cold-war silence. At the top of Holly Hill he asked, "Which way now?"

"Fork right. Third house on the right." We stopped just short of it. I said, "Thank you. It's been *very* nice."

I'd begun to get out when another car came up behind and turned to go into our garage. "Hold it," he said. "I'll draw ahead to let this character get in."

He drove on a few yards, and I knew by the expert swing of the other car into the garage that it was my mother driving. I said again, "Thank you very much. Good night."

Of course he had to get out and help me, then Erica was on us and I had to introduce him. We talked for a few minutes before he drove off. "Who's the young man?" she said.

"He's an artist. I met him at Sarah's."

"Oh?" Interest stirred in her voice. It was a mistake to have told her he was an artist. "Ask him in for drinks sometime. You should have more men friends. There's absolutely no reason why not."

"No. No reason at all."

That night I had my old dream back. I was in a coffin but it wasn't long enough and my head stuck out through a hole in the end. My arms and legs were tied and I couldn't move. Undertakers were looking at me and soon I would be buried and earth would be shoveled into my mouth. I tried to scream, to explain that I wasn't dead, that only my body was dead, my head was alive. But it wasn't just burial they intended. It was torture too. There was this terrible sound of a great animal breathing. The men were watching some dials—the pain was going to *start*.

One of the undertakers began to push a rubber tube up my nose, and every now and then he said "Swallow" and pushed in a bit more; and then I had no breath to call out, only pain. The weight of burial was on my chest. I was dying, dying . . .

I was struggling as Erica shook me awake. "Deborah! You'll disturb your father!"

No one, *no one* who has not suffered such nightmares can understand the inexpressible bliss of waking to find a familiar bed, a familiar room, movement in one's limbs, easy breathing, a stern but familiar hand. No pain. And no iron lung.

"You were crying. That awful whimpering sound."

"Sorry, Erica. I'll be all right now."

"I wondered if going out with that young man . . . it's years since you had one of these turns."

"Nightmares. *Sorry* to have got you out of bed." I lay back and stretched luxuriously. "I was being buried alive."

### CHAPTER III

THE MOST threadbare things in the world are yesterday's smart ideas, such as calling one's parents by their Christian names. The notion is that it helps abolish the gap between the generations, but this is nonsense. Nothing can abolish a gap of twenty to thirty years. More important is a good imagination on the child's part and a good memory on the parent's; for a child can only *try* to imagine what it is like to be a parent, while a parent ought to remember what it's like to be a child. Erica wasn't awfully good at this. She varied between trying to thrust me into relationships with men and trying to guard me against them, when all I wanted was to live the life I'd worked out for myself.

On the next Saturday Sarah and Arabella came to supper. We had hardly got through the grapefruit before Erica was saying she had twice heard young Hartley ringing up, and me telling Minta, the daily maid, to tell him I was out. Then we had to discuss whether or not I should choke him off. Sarah had met him at David Hambro's, and David had met him through an antique dealer. Sarah said she'd ask David about him, and I said, "This family is disgusting; it will leave absolutely nothing alone."

The following Tuesday we were busy in Whittington's. I had a sandwich for lunch and did not slip out until four for a cup of tea. As I came out into the thundery gloom of Grafton Street a voice said, "Do you know that the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand? Who shall abide in thy tabernacle? Only Deborah Dainton, who now turneth a cold fish eye on him who waiteth."

I said, "How did you know I should be coming out now?"

"I didn't. I came at twelve and waited."

I felt flattered, angry at feeling flattered, happier than I'd been two minutes ago, but wanting no part in it. I walked on, and he walked with me, taking the side that my stick wasn't.

I said, "You must be—crazy. Don't you ever work?"

"Constantly. But look at the day. This light is impossible. Where are you going? For tea?"

"Yes. Why can't you—" I was going to say "leave me alone."

"Join you?" he said.

"If you want."

We turned into a café that tried to look continental, with a sunshade in the open entrance and an artificial palm. He ordered tea and toast. He said, "Last time we met, you asked me to face the facts of life. Well, most of them begin with boy meets girl. Clue me up with the special facts in this case."

"Well, as you pointed out, I'm lame. I had polio. One leg is about an inch shorter than the other. The muscles have wasted, it's as thin as a stick. Understand?"

"Is that a good reason for hating me?"

I said angrily, "Can't I have likes and dislikes?"

The waitress came with our order. He glowered, and my fingers shook with annoyance as I poured the tea.

He said, "How old are you?"

"Twenty-six."

"I'm twenty-five. I want to paint you."

"Oh, so that's it. . . . And all the time I thought you were attracted by my exquisite charm."

"I am, damn you." We looked at each other like enemies. "What time d'you get off tonight?" he said.

"Oh, it'll be late. Six thirty or seven."

"I'll wait for you."

I sipped the tea and burned my lip. "You're wasting your time."

"Well, it's my time, isn't it? I live in Rotherhithe. Do you know where that is?"

"Near Tower Bridge?"

"Fairly. I've got a studio that looks over the river. I'd like to show it to you."

"All right," I said.

"You'll come?" He looked astonished. "When—tonight?"

"Yes, just to see it. But forget about painting me."

"O.K., O.K. I only asked."

"Yes, but is that why you wanted me to come to your studio?"

He took a bite of his toast. "I wanted it for every reason, Deborah. You must have noticed that. But so far I've had no encouragement. Well . . . this is encouragement—"

"Yes, but—"

"Message received. I deal but you play the hand. Right? I'll meet you at six thirty, outside the front door."

HE WAS WAITING for me in the little red car and we drove across Westminster Bridge, and east along the New Kent Road. Up Tower Bridge Road there was a break in the traffic and he accelerated away. The car was open and the back draft blew my hair over my eyes. I put up my hands to hold it, but he said, "Let it blow; it looks fabulous."

We turned right before the bridge and came into newly developed property—low-income housing, flats, playgrounds—and then dived up an alley with derricks at the end of it. He stopped in a narrow chasm of a street between warehouses, and parked on the pavement. "This is it."

We got out and he led the way through a gate to a shabby brick wall with a Victorian door up three steps.

"I'll go first. Mind your head." We went into a big long room with a low ceiling at the sides rising to a high peak, with open rafters. There were two big windows looking over the river, and a skylight. The room was in an awful mess—littered with easels, cloths, painting knives, brushes, tubes of paint. His pictures were stacked in heaps.

"It was a stable at one time," he said, taking out a comb and combing his hair. He was nervous, an odd change. "Come to this window, you can see Tower Bridge."

The river was lapping at our feet. It was iron gray in the sultry evening, with little grins of sharper light where it was broken

by movement. Steel derricks bent over the water like birds drinking, tugs and barges passed, smoke rose and eddied, sea gulls swooped. It was a different London, one I didn't know.

"Swans!" I said.

"Yes, I feed 'em about this time. Wait a minute." He went and fetched half a loaf of bread. "We can get out this way." Beside the window, a door opened onto a concrete platform just above the river. "At high tide this balcony's under water. Don't fall in!"

Six swans came. They paddled and gobbled as we fed them in turns. The air was fresh and smelled of the sea. I felt good. "I envy you this!" I said.

He smiled. "It's hell when the barges are unloading. But this view's here day and night, winter and summer."

We went in, and he fixed drinks. "The air's lovely here," I said. "At Whittington's, when I'm cataloguing, I'm in a stuffy cellar."

"Tell me about your work."

I told him, and he listened as if he were really interested. "How d'you mean, you work in a cellar?"

"Whittington's is like a rabbit warren. The office where I catalogue is under the pavement of Grafton Street. If you look, you'll see the opaque glass squares that let in the light."

"I'll remember to stamp next time. Three bangs means I'm waiting to take you to lunch."

I laughed. We sat by the window watching the scene changing in the early evening light.

"Do you have to know anything about painting in your job?"

"One picks up a bit. But our business is to sell old things that have acquired a value. A new painting would be more likely to fetch a price in an exhibition."

"Yeah." He swallowed a gulp of his gin and tonic. "But where do you get your exhibition? That's the crunch."

"I thought David Hambro told Sarah you'd had one."

"Oh, that. In a flea-bitten hall in Southwark." He breathed through his thin nose. "D'you know, Deborah, how artists live—other than the well-known ones? Well, they don't! They paint—and if they're lucky they get a few hung in the local pub, and

someone may take a fancy to one of them. Or if they know the right guys they may do a mural for the local civic center. After that they can hawk their pictures round the art shops or stack 'em away like I do, till there's too many of 'em. Then I have a bonfire."

I said, "A lot of people buy paintings nowadays . . ."

"The paintings buyer," he said vigorously, "is two separate breeds. There's the With-It, Art-Conscious, junior executive. In his case the painting has to be so with-it that he can't afford a genuine one. So he gets a reproduction."

"I know the type," I said, thinking of Erica's abstracts.

"The others buy paintings like they buy stocks, for their money value. What good are they for the average artist?"

"None," I said. "I know."

There was silence while a barge stage-managed a pile of timber slowly past the window. Leigh said, "Well, God bless Aunt Nellie. Her nest egg will keep me for a while. Let's go out and eat."

"May I see one or two paintings first?"

He showed me half a dozen, all river scenes. They had a factualness and fidelity that appealed to me—you could put one on a wall and think that's how it would be to have a window on the Thames. But this fidelity would be a disadvantage today.

He said, "O.K., that'll do for a first dose— Oh, Lord, you got a spot of paint on your shoulder. Stay still." He took out his handkerchief, spat on it, rubbed. "I think it's out."

He was very close. Eyes weighted with purpose. At twenty-six, I should have known the purpose; but that was the trouble: learner-driver. Everybody's got to learn, even late in life.

He kissed me. I turned my mouth away. Kissed my cheek, his hands fumbling about my body. I put my hands on his chest, but he hugged me like a bear, his cheek against mine. Then we were separate. "Sorry," he said. "I reckon this isn't in the auctioneer's handbook. Never try to claim goods before the hammer's down."

I was choked with anger and contempt and embarrassment. I picked up my coat and looked for my stick.

There was a knock on the door. Leigh swore and opened it. There was some muttering and a man came in.



Leigh said, "This is Ted Sandymount. Miss Dainton."

About forty; well dressed by Carnaby Street standards; thin, brown wavy hair brushed back like the grain in wood, a smooth tanned face, bloodshot selfish little eyes, a nervous twitch that was half a wink and half a sniff. He padded across, shook my hand and eyed me knowledgeably, as if he'd heard about me. Or perhaps he was used to finding girls here.

"Pleased to meet you, Miss Dainton. Muggy weather, isn't it? I just dropped in, Leigh, with this packet. Jack said to come—"

"Well, thank Jack, will you?" said Leigh impatiently. "I wasn't in all that hurry for the paints. We were just going out to eat. Otherwise I'd say stop and have a drink."

"No, no, I'm on my way." Ted Sandymount winked at me. "Bye-bye, Miss Dainton. See you again."

I found my stick. "We can all go now," I said.

#### CHAPTER IV

"Miss Dainton," said the receptionist, "there's a lady here with a couple of little bottles. A Mrs. Stevenson."

"All right. I'll come up." I made my way through the cellar where pictures were stacked before cataloguing, climbed the steps and went by the auction rooms to the reception counter where an old woman in a torn raincoat was waiting.

Leigh had torn the lining of his coat, getting out of the car at the little café where we ate last night. It had been a silent meal. I would have been glad to escape it, but I didn't want him to think I was a Victorian heroine shrinking from a first kiss. "Ted Sandymount's an electrician," he had told me. "Does work for ships. Good chap, under his smoothie looks. Would do anything for me."

Mrs. Stevenson said: "I brought these little trinkets in. I think they must be of value. My dear mother kept them in her cabinet." She had a voice like a worn-out record. I unwrapped the paper, expecting the usual toby jug or sham Rockingham. I found a beautifully fashioned shepherdess guarding a lamb, no bigger

than four inches, and an even smaller group of three birds. The shepherdess and all three birds had detachable heads.

"Why," Leigh had asked in the car on the way home, "did you not let me kiss your mouth? It looks nice. Isn't it for use?"

"These are scent bottles," I said to Mrs. Stevenson. "About 1750. They're valuable. We have a porcelain sale the twentieth of June, we could include them."

Old eyes suddenly speculative, cautious. "How valuable?"

"They're Chelsea, the best period. They'll probably realize between three and four hundred pounds each."

I had said to Leigh in livid anger, "I don't *want* to get involved with *anyone*! Are you a complete fool? Do I have to spell it out again? Now leave me alone!"

Mrs. Stevenson picked up the shepherdess, and her hand shook. "My, oh my, oh my!" I took the scent bottle gently from her and put it safely on the counter. "I'd thought about—about twenty pounds. I'm a little short of—of money. But are you sure? You look very young . . ."

I offered to get my estimate confirmed, but she shook her head. I gave her a receipt for the figures and suggested that she attend the auction on the twentieth.

When I went back to the department with the prizes, Maurice Mills and three or four others gathered round in admiration. So often people came in with prized possessions handed down from grandparents, and you had the job of disillusioning them—the heirloom was worthless. Like my friendship with Leigh Hartley. Worthless and foredoomed. But these two little figures were exquisite, the work of rare craftsmen. One could hardly bear to see them sold. . . . A fatal mistake. One mustn't get attached, not even to Chelsea figures.

"When am I going to see you again?" Leigh had asked.

That had been the moment to finish it, in his car, parked near Douglas's brass plate. But I'd weakly said, "Perhaps next week."

"Make it Monday."

"I'm going out Monday."

"Tuesday then."

"All right, Tuesday."

"Why don't you ask Leigh Hartley for drinks next Sunday?" Erica had said when I got in. "Arabella will be here and a few others."

"I don't think he's quite your type," I said.

"My dear Deborah, Douglas and I pride ourselves on being able to talk to the young. It's an attitude of mind."

Everything, it seemed, was an attitude of mind. Sex included. My two sisters differed about this. Sarah, at twenty-seven, had given herself to no one. "When I marry," she had said, "I shall marry for love and I don't believe in being secondhand goods."

Twenty-year-old Arabella had said, "If I want to make love to a man I shall do so. And I don't in the least feel I shall be second-hand goods. Aren't we born to live?"

"Darling," Sarah had said, "there's only so much experience, whether it's sex or any other sort. If you fritter, you cheapen. What do you say, Deb?"

I didn't remember what I'd said; what did it matter to me? Who wanted to make love to a girl with a shriveled leg? Then what did Leigh Hartley want? There were plenty of normal girls around, without his picking on me.

John Hallows, our youngest director, who dealt with jewelry, came in with a ruby ring he wanted Maurice Mills's opinion of. I slid off my stool to look at it. My leg was aching.

"Sitting in at the sale tomorrow, Deborah?" John Hallows said. "We've got some luscious pieces coming up."

I nodded, smiling. He was the type of man I would have liked for a brother: good-looking, kind, sharp as a needle, but alert to other people's feelings. We liked and respected each other.

"If you can get hold of your friend for Sunday," my mother had said, "I'll invite that fresco artist, and the two from Chelsea who paint jointly by a new process. Why don't you ring him?"

"I don't think he has a phone."

"Is he at an art school, d'you know?" Erica had asked.

"No. He says he wants to paint the way he wants to paint."

"I'm like a man whittling a stick," Leigh had said. "I paint be-

cause I want to, but it's of no flaming interest to anyone else. It drives you up the wall. Of course I'm learning—"

I spoke to Mr. Smith-Williams, who was in charge of paintings at Whittington's. "If one wanted to help a young artist, how would one go about it?" I asked.

"What sort of a young artist?"

"Well, he has been painting quite a while. But he hasn't had much recognition. I wouldn't like to judge his stuff myself."

"Try the West End galleries. Get an opinion from two or three of the more honest of them. See if they'll take a few of his paintings. The Maud Brothers are absolutely straight. And Arthur Hays of the Cheltenham Galleries."

IT WAS raining on Thursday, and Leigh was waiting for me outside Whittington's in his car.

"I can't—" I began.

"I've come to take you home." The glint in his eye showed he knew he had silenced me. "It's better'n waiting for a bus, isn't it?"

He was wearing a pink linen jacket without lapels, and corduroy trousers of the wrong brown, and too tight. As we drove off he said, "One day I want you to come ice skating with me."

"What *are* you talking about? You must be crazy."

"Because you've only got one good leg? Well, that's three between us. It's plenty. I reckon you could do far more than you do. Do you ever swim?"

"In the physiotherapy baths."

"That's no good. The English are scared of going on a beach if they've a varicose vein! In Italy or Spain nobody cares: cripples, old people, fat people, they all enjoy the sun."

We broke free of the traffic and raced up Gloucester Place.

"As a cripple, an old person or a fat person," I said, "I enjoy the sun very much in my own way."

"But you're afraid to enjoy it in ways that might make you be looked at. It's a great mistake."

"It's a great mistake," I said, "to suppose that this line is going to get you anywhere."

"Where I want it to get us is to the ice rink next Tuesday. Deborah, I'm not trying to shove you around. I just *like* you."

We went up the Finchley Road, juggling with the involved traffic lights. His little car was old and the hood rattled. His big square hands were stained with paint.

I said, "I know, Leigh. I've snapped at you a lot."

"Not as if you meant to bite." We roared up Holly Hill. "See you next week," he said.

"If you want to, but not—"

"On ice? O.K. You're the boss."

AND THEN he turned up at the cocktail party after all. My mother apparently got an invitation to him through David Hambro, and I suspected when I saw the look in Leigh's eye—like a horse that means mischief—that he'd had it when we last met.

There were ten guests that Sunday, and seven were abstract painters. A man called Collins was interested in expressing psychiatry on canvas. The two who painted jointly were trying to advance the technique of collage by cutting holes in the panels on which they mounted their compositions. I found it rather tense because I could see that my family was trying to size Leigh up. Erica edged him into a group arguing about form, but he wasn't having any. He talked to me, flirted with Arabella, and once or twice I saw him talking to Douglas.

When they all left about nine, I made sandwiches and coffee and took a tray in to Erica, who was in the drawing room, emptying ashtrays. Douglas had gone out to see a patient.

Erica said, "I did think of asking Claude Collins and your man to stay on for an omelette, but they didn't seem to get on. Your man's not articulate, is he?"

"Sit down and put your feet up," I said good-humoredly, "and don't call him my man. He's articulate when he feels like it. You got what you deserved, asking him behind my back."

"My dear, we're concerned for your future—Douglas and I—so naturally we wanted to *meet* him. And seeing him here in your own home will help you to bring him into perspective." She sat

down and sipped her coffee. "He left me something, by the way. A parcel by the front door. If you're not too tired . . ."

I swallowed a mouthful of bread and butter and chicken and went down to get the parcel. I knew at once what it was.

"One of his paintings," Erica said, unwrapping it. "Very civilized of him."

It was quite small, a scene of London docks, cranes in the foreground and a tug bringing up a string of barges. Erica stared at it fixedly. "Very—civilized of him," she said again. She propped the picture with distaste against the leg of a chair. "Really," she said, looking round, "a dozen people turn a room into a shambles."

I went on staring at the picture. Suddenly I said, with a breathless anger, "I think it would be better if I didn't live at home."

"Whatever makes you say that?"

"You'd feel less responsible for me."

"I wouldn't want you to leave, Deborah, you know that."

The glasses tittered together as I put them on the tray.

She said: "We weren't trying to *interfere* with your friendship with Leigh Hartley. I thought you'd appreciate our asking him."

"Well, I don't!" I dropped a glass and it shattered. I knelt awkwardly and began to pick up the bits.

Erica said with false patience, "Don't get into one of your tempers. Of course we feel responsible for you. Love *creates* responsibility. We feel the same for Sarah and Arabella—"

"Not in the same way."

"In just the same way. But I agree, the essence of good family life is that every member of the family should feel free within it. Douglas says it's the only psychological basis."

I went to the window, fuming. It was not the interference that I found so intolerable but this casual and absolute judgment of Leigh's work. I banged the window open to clear the smoke. Douglas was just coming up the steps. His bald head shone pale in the lamplight. I realized I had little in common with Leigh, except that, temporarily, I was on his side.

In fact I had nothing in common with him. If I was getting emotionally involved, it was against my own judgment.

ON TUESDAY WE DROVE TO A CLUB in Wapping, where he said artists met. It was a sleazy place, with brassy barmaids and a clientele to match. We saw Ted Sandymount, who looked at ease here, a fish in water. A big man called Jack Foil came and sat at our table. He was about fifty, with a fleshy, heavy face and thick gold-rimmed glasses in which the lenses looked like pebbles. His voice was thick and pompous and he smelled of carnation. He was a promoter and antique dealer.

He and Leigh talked about the exhibition Leigh had had. Jack Foil had helped to put it on, and he thought they might arrange another. Leigh seemed anxious to agree with whatever Jack Foil said. Foil went out of his way with elephantine politeness to keep me in the conversation. He seemed to look with a paternal eye on Leigh and said, "Bless you, my children," in parting. But his square back looked formidable; he would be a good man to be on the right side of.

It was an alien world. I asked Leigh if he had been born round here.

"No, I come from Swindon. My old dad is an inspector on British Railways. My mother was an arts teacher at Swindon High School; she didn't do much painting after she was married. She had three kids and then died. I went to the Swindon school, then got a job as a clerk, until Aunt Nellie coughed up this money."

"Since when," I said, "I suppose you've had a lot of paint and a lot of women in your life."

He showed his teeth in a grimace. "Yes to number one, no to number two. There's been one other woman. You think artists are like those lily-necked twerps your mother dragged out from under some stone last Sunday. You think all an artist does is hop in and out of bed—the true artist hasn't got that much *time*."

"Where do Ted Sandymount and Jack Foil fit into your artistic world?"

"They're part of the *real* world. They're people I knock along with. I understand them, see? They get on with the business of living and don't wrap their notions up in fancy paper and string."

"Unless," I said, "it happened to be black-market string."

He looked at me. "You're a sharp little devil; I love you for it. Tell me about this polio thing. When was it?"

"Years ago. I was ten at the time."

"Well, what's wrong with your leg exactly?"

"It won't work much from the knee down and it's not absolutely right from the knee up." I'd been very lucky, the specialist had said, to get complete recovery of my breathing and my right leg.

"Does it hurt to walk? I mean this look on your face. It sends me. Like a—like a madonna who's had a car accident."

"No, but I don't walk as instinctively as a normal person."

"Why can't I paint you?"

His hands were on the table, palms downwards, showing the fuzz of dark hair from fingers to wrist.

"Have you ever done portraits?"

"Oh, yes. If I could paint you, it would be a big help."

". . . I'll think about it."

He said, "Tell me more about your job. I'm interested."

"You'd be bored."

"Try me."

I tried him. Later we drove home, and I agreed to meet him on the following Tuesday. He said why didn't we meet every Tuesday and Thursday. I said no, I sometimes worked late—I was struggling not to get too committed. The fish, you'll notice, always does struggle, even when it's firmly on the hook.

THE NEXT Tuesday I was late meeting Leigh. John Hallows was flying to Geneva the following week to pick up a diamond tiara which Lord Vosper was putting in our next sale. Lord Vosper had tax-dodged himself abroad ten years ago, but had been living beyond himself. The tiara, which had belonged to his mother, was valued at forty thousand pounds. There was some discussion on Tuesday evening as to whether I should go too, to see a valuable collection of lusterware that he was also considering selling, but in the end it was decided not to push him.

Leigh took my explanations about Lord Vosper patiently, and



drove me off along the Bayswater Road. We stopped outside what looked like a cinema. I said, "The movies again?"

"Sort of." He went to the desk and bought tickets.

The sound of music. A lot of glittery lights. Suddenly I knew. "Leigh! You fool! I told you." I turned to go.

He caught my arm. "We can *watch*, Deb. No call to do more."

As we went down the stairs, piped organ music was encouraging some sixty or seventy people around an ice-skating rink. We took seats outside the barrier and watched.

I felt anger at being tricked, awareness that it was too trivial to be worth anger, annoyance that I was too sensitive, a wish to throw him over and a knowledge that if I did I'd regret it.

Most of the girl skaters were in flesh-colored tights with tiny frilly skirts. All had beautiful legs. He patted my hand.

"Leigh," I said, "we shall get on much better if you treat me as a grown-up and not as a retarded adolescent who has to be coaxed and cheated into doing things."

He still had his hand over mine. "Crikey, I *like* coaxing you, Deborah. What harm have I done? Just tell me."

I sighed. "We don't talk the same language, do we?"

He wrinkled his forehead. "Maybe I'm not subtle. I go on instincts, and one of my instincts is to try to give you pleasure. But pleasures aren't always pleasures right off. Have patience, lovey."

We watched for a time, then went to a restaurant upstairs which overlooked the rink. While we were eating the experts danced. This was much pleasanter for me to watch. I could enjoy the tennis at Wimbledon but not at the local club.

About eleven he drove me home. Outside our house he leaned over and kissed me. I didn't turn away. He said, "Debby, Debby, Debby, what a gorgeous kiss. I love you. You weren't meant to be a nun. Remember that, can you, till Thursday?"

I remembered it till Thursday.

WE WENT to Ted Sandymount's flat on the sixteenth floor of a new block of flats in Rotherhithe. From his picture window you got a view of London's dockland, stretching from Tower Bridge

to Greenwich. The river curled like a dangerous snake slipping half hidden through the city.

I couldn't like Ted. He had what Sarah called "lavatory humor," a vulgarity which cheapened what it touched. I couldn't see how he appealed to Leigh, who wasn't at all like that. But that evening Ted seemed to be laying it on for me. He pushed forward the easiest chair, and rushed to get tomato juice when I refused a drink. I thought Leigh must have given out that he was keen on me, and Ted was trying to help the thing along.

As the evening waned, lights began to wink below until the whole city was like a hoard of jewels that had been raided and scattered. "Someday," Leigh said, "I'll come up here and paint it."

"I don't know why you don't paint Deb," Ted said. "She's looking as pretty as a picture right now."

"I'd paint her like a shot if she'd let me," said Leigh.

"What?" said Ted, his face as full of eagerness as a TV commercial. "Why can't he paint you, Deb?"

"Maybe sometime."

"Saturday," said Leigh.

"Not Saturday. It's—too soon. I must think about it."

"Saturday," said Leigh. "It's the thing I need. It's easy to be snide about inspiration, but it's the spark that starts the engine."

"The thing that makes the world go round, eh?" said Ted, patting my good knee. He always had to be patting. "You see, Leigh needs you. Give him a break, eh? Be a pal."

#### CHAPTER V

HE SAID, "Here. This way. I want you three-quarter face, see. That's about it. Head up a fraction. Now . . ."

He stepped back and stared at me. I was sitting on a chair near the window. It was a bright morning, sun and shadow falling in turns over the river.

"Mind if I use my comb on your hair?" Leigh said. He used any excuse, putting his fingers on my neck to turn my head, grasping

my shoulders, smoothing my dress. It was a sort of mock love-making. The awful thing was that I didn't all that much want it to stop.

He fiddled with the comb, then gave a grunt of approval. "That's better. Hang on, I'll take a snap . . . Now hold it."

I waited for the flash. "Isn't this supposed to be a *painting*?"

"Yes, but a snap helps me to get perspective."

"Do you take photographs of all your subjects?"

"The few portraits I've done, sure."

"Who else's have you done?"

"Oh, a few friends." He adjusted the easel so I could not see the canvas, and began making lines.

"The girl you mentioned?"

He looked at me. "Oh, her . . . that's ancient history. Look, I can't concentrate if you talk all the time."

Silence fell for half an hour. Then I said, "I'm getting a cramp."

"All right, relax. I'll shove some coffee on."

"Can I see what you've done?"

"No. Stay there." He went into the kitchen and came back.

"How many sittings will this take?" I asked.

"Oh, three or four."

I walked to the window, massaging my neck. Two tugs were passing, their bright funnels puffing like Roman candles.

"What a marvelous place for Guy Fawkes Day fireworks," I said. "On this beach. You could even have a bonfire."

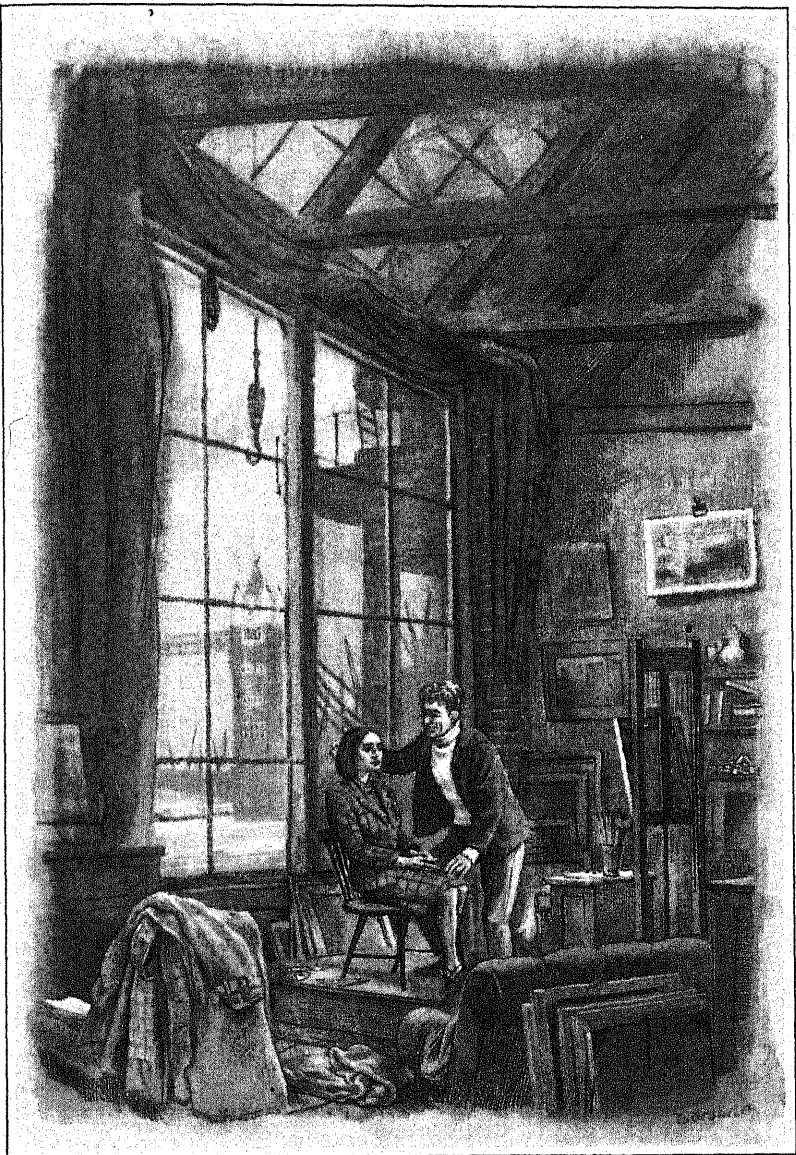
He laughed. "Go on with you. You'd have the Dock Board down on you." He put his arm round me and kissed my neck.

"Tell me about this other girl," I said.

"She was just someone I was keen on, but it didn't figure." He went into the kitchen and came back with the coffee.

"Was she from round here? Was she an artist?"

He gave an irritable hunch of his shoulders. "She came from Ireland, her name was Lorne. She was twenty. She's now in Stratford-on-Avon, working as a receptionist at a hotel. She's five feet four and dark, with blue eyes. I painted her six times." He added roughly, "Now tell me about *your* love life."



"Sorry."

"No, no. I should be flattered that you're curious."

I got back on my chair and he lifted my chin an inch. "Other women aren't important," he said. "D'you believe me?"

"I don't know enough about you, whether you forget what you felt for them, how soon you'll forget what you feel for me."

He was painting now. "You've got this kinky view of artists."

"Perhaps it's just a general view of men."

"Well, stop being in a groove. I want you to come skating on Tuesday."

I WENT skating with him. I wore a pair of stretch pants I had bought in France, and these hid quite a lot. We hired ice skates, and he insisted on putting mine on for me. He took off my built-up shoe and fitted the skate onto my thin foot, with an extra sock inside. When he had put on his own skates, he helped me to limp to the edge of the rink. I felt everybody was staring as I put a wobbly skate on the ice, and I hated him for the humiliation.

He said, "Don't think about slipping, just hold on to me."

He got on my left side so that my weak leg was between us, and pushed off. My good leg at once wanted to shoot from under me. We glissaded into the side and all but fell. I swore deeply in my heart but said nothing. It was no good being angry with him—only with myself for being such an unutterable fool. So we tried again and nearly fell. "Good," he said, the idiot. "We nearly made it that time."

At the seventh attempt I said breathlessly, "Let me go—it's no good! For heaven's sake, Leigh! You go on your own."

"Another one—just for luck. Nobody's looking."

His strong body was like a rock against mine. We began to go round the rink. We almost made a complete circle before a skater made him swerve and we had to fetch up at the side.

"You see!" he said laughing. "You *did* it! If that nit hadn't been in our way we'd have gone on forever!"

Begin again. And this time it really did work. My left leg had just enough power to push at the ice and I could gain a grip by

turning the, thigh. His triumph was so real that I found myself laughing with him. We rested, then tried again. We went round six times before going upstairs for coffee and sandwiches.

"Next time it'll be easier," he said. He held my hand, fingering it as if to feel each bone. "There's other things. Dancing. Swimming. South of France is the place. We could go on a trip . . ."

I didn't discourage him. I was feeling ridiculously pleased. And so well! Tired but relaxed, skin tingling, appetite keen, and alive, alive, alive. He looked at me and smiled his all-embracing, rather beautiful smile.

FRIDAY AT Whittington's. I was doing letters. Upstairs, Smith-Williams was conducting a sale of English watercolors. A van was at our back door in Bruton Yard unloading furniture.

A telephone rang in the office of Peter Greeley, the head of the firm. It was from a hospital in Geneva to say that John Hallows had had a car accident and was in bed with a concussion.

Greeley called my boss, Maurice Mills, and three other directors into his office. Hallows had been expected to fly back that afternoon with the Vosper tiara. Presumably he had this with him, but Greeley had not liked to discuss it on the telephone. After a few minutes, Hallows himself rang us to say that his injuries were slight, but that the accident had been a put-up job. He and the chauffeur had been set on by masked men and the tiara was gone. Greeley and Maurice Mills decided to take the next plane to Switzerland.

The following morning Leigh called for me at ten. On the way to his place I told him about the tiara. He whistled. "Somebody's been pretty sharp. Also someone's been pretty dimwit. You sent Hallows off to collect a valuable tiara without a guard?"

"Often it's the safest way. The less publicity the better."

"Yes, if someone isn't in the know. Of course, it's insured?"

"Oh, yes."

We got to his studio and I found the chair and easel ready. But the painting was covered until I was settled; and there was no chance of seeing it. I sat in silence while he painted away.

Then he said, "These characters who do these robberies—you can't help but admire 'em."

"Admire them?"

"Well, I reckon there's two sorts of crimes—the anti-human and the anti-property. I've no room at all for the first: the lout who clobbers an old woman and steals her bag, the man who shoots a bank messenger, the sex criminal. I'd belt 'em all!" He dabbed at his palette. "But the type that goes for insured company property, like gold, or banknotes, the man who pits his wits against the law, playing the game to the rules—no violence, or the minimum—you can admire his cleverness, his nerve."

"I don't suppose John Hallows will."

I watched him work, the concentrated frown, the hand moving swiftly between palette and canvas, the big mouth with sensitive lips parted. He said, "How do you think on morals, not just sex morals but ethics? D'you believe in all those Commandments?"

"I don't know. Do you?"

He shrugged. "I'm poor enough to wish I'd the knack of making big money quickly. Too many smooth operators are striking it rich these days for me to feel a twinge of conscience if I could come by money easy. Lucky the chance isn't likely to arise."

"You've money enough to go on with?"

"Oh, scraping along—honest Jim in his garret. You've never wanted for anything, money can't have the same importance—"

"It can have plenty!"

"Yes, but look at my old man on the railways. He's got a safe job, but one of the worst paid. His union fights a battle and he gets an extra twelve-and-six a week, but the cost of living rises faster than his wages. Could you blame him if he cooked up some figures somewhere to wangle a few extra quid?"

"Did he?"

"Not him! It would be against his principles. But I'm not sure his son might not be tempted— Ah, you've moved!"

"I must have been shrinking away from you in horror."

"Well, it's time for the coffee break. I'll help you down."

Instead, he lifted me, then lowered me gently, keeping his arms

round me. I smiled. But he wasn't smiling. "I got a tough job. I have to thaw you out gently like a—an angel with frostbite. It's good for me, teaches me patience—Chinese patience nearly. Chinese torture sometimes. Only one thing could make me so patient."

"What's that?"

"Don't you know? You shouldn't even have to guess."

He put his mouth against my cheek and kissed it. I smoothed his hair. A step or two took us to a couch, and he bent and swept newspapers off it. I lay on it and he knelt beside it, stroking my face and then my body. He began to kiss my mouth, neck and arms. A sudden wave of emotion sluiced over me and I'd no control of thought or action. His mouth came up to mine and his hands were making magic life and a fiery compulsion that had no end but acceptance. Then sanity was falling out of the skies and I was sitting up. He moved back, drawing deep breaths, his gray eyes pale. A tug hooted in the river.

He said, "I'll get the coffee, Deborah." His voice was supplicatory. "You got to admit until now I've been patient. This was—a sudden crack, see. I'm ready to go at your rate, from now on."

IT WAS heavy and still that night when he drove me home. Whiffs of lilac and wallflower surfaced through the traffic smells. Houses glimmered like lighted barges.

We had gone out to lunch in Greenwich. Afterwards we had walked beside the river and sat on the soft sand where a notice said DANGEROUS FOR BATHING. We had had dinner at Erith and taken a roundabout way home.

No more had been said about that five minutes in the studio, but it couldn't be ignored. I wasn't unhappy that it had occurred. And unless I took a drastic decision now, it would happen again. Not a problem then? Arabella wouldn't think so. I did. Who to ask? Sarah? She was the sanest, most down-to-earth of my family.

At the door of our house he kissed me just once. Affectionate, being patient. Or had he concluded that I was too delicate for that sort of thing?

"Tuesday as usual?"



"All right."

"Night, love."

"Good night, Leigh." I watched him drive away, and took a deep breath. I was happy. Life was good enough, I was strong enough. That was what mattered.

In the drawing room I found Arabella, reading. Draped over the settee, her blond hair falling voluptuously, she contrived to make the stark room exciting. Erica had gone to bed with a headache, she said, and Douglas was out on a call.

Though Arabella and I normally discussed everything under the sun, it was only on a skim-surface level. I found I couldn't ask her about her new young man, Bruce Spring, couldn't say: "Are you happy? How do you feel? How does it work out?" So I left her to her book and went up to bed.

The light was underlining Erica's door so I tapped and went in. She was sitting up, reading, in a blue silk bed jacket, her glasses half down her nose. "Hullo, darling," I said. "Headache?"

"No, no. Just tired." She pushed her glasses up. "Difficult cases always come in blocks. And you? With Leigh again?"

"Yes. . . . What did you do with the picture he gave you?"

"It's in Sarah's room. I asked Sarah to ask David Hambro about Leigh. David confirms what Leigh told you, that he came to London a few years ago on a legacy and has been painting since."

"Well, I didn't suppose he was a liar."

"Oh, no. Of course not. It wasn't for that reason one asked."

"For what reason then? I'm off to bed," I said.

"Did you know," Erica said, "that Leigh was married?"

On the table beside Douglas's bed was a pile of colored folders. Greece, Corfu, Yugoslavia. Erica's holiday in Ireland had been fixed months ago. Douglas never decided until the last minute.

"Oh, yes," I said.

"You *knew*? Have you met his wife?"

"No."

One advantage of my father and mother's working in different practices was that they could be on holiday at the same time. Though they went in opposite directions . . .

Something fought its way up into my mind. "She lives in Stratford-on-Avon, works as a receptionist at a hotel."

"Are they divorced?"

"I've no idea." I was trying to swallow something sour that had come into my throat. "You're so civilized, Erica—don't you believe in Platonic friendship?"

"Not with him, I wouldn't. There's an earthiness about him. It surprises me . . ."

But I didn't learn what surprised her. I changed the subject and, as soon as I could, escaped to my room.

THE FRAGMENT of the Attic black-figure vase was made of a high quality clay of about the sixth century B.C. It was polished and orange-red in color and had a dance scene painted on it in black. One pictured it complete: a graceful urn shape with slim handles like ears and a flat black lid. It represented perfection in a style which soon after changed to red figure and thus set off a new chain of invention and inspiration. A good example of the red-figure style had come into Whittington's, but it had gone too high for me. I would have loved to steal it.

Perhaps my moral standard was no higher than Leigh's. He would steal if he could; he had lied (by omission) about his wife. Who cared for ethics these days? Life was a free-for-all.

I shut my eyes but didn't put off the light. She came from Ireland. Her name was Lorne. She was five feet four and dark with blue eyes, and he painted her six times. Also, he happened to marry her. A simple little occurrence not worth mentioning. This morning his lips had been on mine. It meant nothing these days. Lighthearted lovemaking. A civilized girl didn't get jealous, blood didn't beat, heart freeze. Fun was the thing. *Then come kiss me, sweet and twenty, Youth's a stuff will not endure.* But when you're twenty-six and twisted of mind and body?

Two lovely plates. Rest, cool one's soul on them. One on either side of the long mirror. The Rockingham, in apple green, had been a birthday present from Sarah and Arabella. Ornately scrolled, a sailing ship at anchor, land and castle behind, painted

a delicate apricot. On the other side was a Coalport, painted with flowers by William Cook and rimmed with gold.

To get away, that was the thing. Time to think, to forget. I ought to put the light out. . . . I'm crazy about you, Deborah. Why did you not let me kiss your mouth? Isn't it for use?

Twenty past three. A pain in my solar plexus. Mustn't be red-eyed in the morning or Erica will suspect. *Out* with the light . . . Heart goes thump, thump, thump. Not ready yet for the grave. But how am I alive at this moment in inky darkness? Only perhaps because I can feel pain.

I GOT UP about seven and took a bath. I crept down and got the Sunday paper and stared at it over a cup of tea. I couldn't make sense of it, so I went back to bed until nine. Then I rang Sarah.

Over breakfast with Erica and Arabella I said, "On Tuesday I'm going to stay with Sarah. Just for a few weeks. Virginia is starting her holiday on Thursday, and Sarah will be alone."

Erica spread butter on her Ryvita. "I'm sure you're better here, Deborah. Regular meals and a settled life. And that would take us up to the holidays, so you'd be there for *seven* weeks."

"Not if I came to join you. I've no plans for my holiday."

"If you stay with Sarah," Arabella said, "you might find out how serious she is over Philip Bartholomew. You remember him; he was at that party doing a fly-round-honeypot act."

I didn't remember. Perhaps because someone had been doing a fly-round-honeypot act with me.

"What does he do?" Erica asked Arabella.

"He's in law. Serious type. His father's a judge."

Highly suitable. Not East End and fly-by-night. The son of a judge, not a railway worker. The friend of law and order, not the friend of Ted Sandymount and Jack Foil.

Douglas came in looking shiny and clean. He greeted his family with engagingly frank, cool eyes, and his family got up and made fresh coffee and put on his eggs and bacon. I wondered how much he knew of my friendship with Leigh Hartley; more important, how much he cared. I would have *loved* to tell him

everything, that I'd been half caught by a man who hadn't told me he was married . . . But it wouldn't work. If I asked him about any impersonal subject, he'd listen and he would talk intelligently and with sincerity. But if I went to him with a *personal* problem, he would shift away mentally as if to avoid contact.

They'd done their best, Douglas and Erica. We were on a civilized level; friendly, companionable. The only thing lacking was loving-kindness.

## CHAPTER VI

JOHN HALLOWS was back as usual on Monday morning, a plaster on his cheekbone. It was the day of the porcelain sale. Mrs. Stevenson's two little Chelsea scent bottles fetched three hundred twenty-five pounds and three hundred seventy-five pounds, so my estimate hadn't been bad.

On Tuesday I telephoned Whittington's and told them I had a sore throat. Then I packed a bag. As I reached for a scarf in the top of the wardrobe, my fingers closed over the irons I'd worn until I was twenty. I tried them round my leg, and it seemed as if it had filled out a bit.

Erica was just leaving for her surgery. She said, "If people ring, do I tell them you're at Sarah's?"

"Of course," I said. "I'm not in hiding, darling."

That evening, Sarah being on duty, I went to the cinema and didn't get home till late. The telephone didn't ring that night.

Wednesday I went back to work. At Whittington's, people wander in and out of the showrooms all day, inspecting the stuff. They have no business downstairs where the cataloguing takes place, but no one questions the occasional intruder, and I thought all day that Leigh would suddenly appear. I didn't go out for lunch, and in the evening I slipped out of the back entrance.

Philip Bartholomew, a thin, pale young man, came to dinner at Sarah's flat. Virginia was excited about her holiday, and we had a jolly evening. Or they had.

Halfway through dinner the telephone rang. Sarah came back from the bedroom to say, "It's for you, Deb."

I went and picked up the telephone.

"Hullo, Deborah. I've caught up with you. This is that man Hartley. Who you had an appointment with last night."

"Oh, yes, sorry; I had a bit of a throat."

"Are you better?"

"Yes, thanks."

"We'll meet tomorrow as usual, then?"

"No, I can't tomorrow."

"Oh . . . I'll call for you Saturday morning, then, as usual."

"No, I can't this Saturday."

"Hey, what's the matter? We were in full flight on the painting. Too long a delay might spoil things."

"Sorry." I could picture his frown, heavy lids down, lips drawn.

"Look, Deborah, I love you. D'you latch on to what that means? What happened in the studio on Saturday—there was nothing wrong. Don't be afraid of it."

"I'm not afraid."

"Then when will you meet me?"

"Not for a while."

"Crikey, I don't get this! I can't believe you don't feel something for me, the way you were on Saturday. So why try to strangle it, now that it's come alive? Why run away?"

"I'm not running away! I'd like a break."

"Give me a chance to finish this portrait. Another couple of sittings—I swear I'll not touch you."

"That isn't the *reason*!"

"Darling, what's the matter? If you—"

"Good-by, Leigh." I slammed down the receiver and sat there trembling and miserable. I couldn't face the others for a bit. I said, stop, stop, *stop*. It'll all be the same in a hundred years, in five years, in one year. I shall think what a fool I was to get upset about such a trivial man. Presently I blew my nose and took a few deep breaths. Proportion. If you see things in proportion half your troubles are not troubles at all.

I told Sarah later that Leigh had become too persistent and I wanted to choke him off.

On Monday John Hallows and Maurice Mills had to go back to Geneva, and I was in charge of the department. This meant working late. By Tuesday evening I didn't feel much like waiting for a bus, so I took a cab to Ennismore Gardens.

It was a warm, dusty evening. The declining sun was flooding the western sides of the buildings. Two dogs played hide-and-seek among the parked cars. As I got to the door, I heard a step behind me.

Leigh said, "I thought you must come sooner or later. Sarah has gone out. Can I come in?"

"I'm tired. I'd rather be alone."

"Deborah, why've you thrown me over?"

"I don't think there was all that much between us." I moved to turn the key.

"No!" He put his arm across the door. "I must know. It's only fair to tell me what's wrong."

I stood there feeling pretty sick.

"Come out to supper with me."

"Just give it up, Leigh. Go back to your wife."

He stared at me. "So *that's* it. Who told you?"

"It's true, I suppose?"

"Oh, it's true. But I haven't so much as *seen* her for over a year. It's washed up. Done with."

I said exhaustedly, "Leigh, if you don't let me go in, I shall call a taxi and drive to Hampstead. But first I want to make it clear about—about us." I swallowed. "I don't know what the rules of this game are. Perhaps there aren't any. But I have to have *some* rules, or I slide gracefully out. That's what I'm trying to do now."

"But surely—"

"Wait. Leigh, if I fell in love with somebody—if I did—and he was married, there's divorce—or in certain circumstances no divorce. But if he didn't *tell* me he was married, he would be cheating from the first step. You don't cheat people you care about."

His face was set in a sullen narrow frown, almost pouting. After

a minute he took his arm from the door. "It isn't quite so dead easy as all that," he said. "Sometimes you're so blind scared of frightening off the person you're in love with—especially when she's *touchy* and *independent*, and doesn't care for you much at the start *anyway*—that you don't dare tell her a thing she won't like. If you do you may lose her in a flash."

Just then Sarah came down the street with Philip Bartholomew. We talked, and Sarah looked at Leigh as if thinking of inviting him in. Then she glanced doubtfully at me.

"I'd best be pushing off," said Leigh. He went towards his car.

MY FATHER and mother left on their separate holidays in the middle of July. Whittington's would be closed as always for August, except for a skeleton staff, so I would take my holiday then, and join Erica in Ireland. Meanwhile I was left in peace, just as before: a quiet life, no hands touching me, no questing lips, no heavy-lidded, anxiously admiring eyes. Peace. Time on my hands.

Sarah's friendship with Philip looked like the real thing. I liked his seriousness: it wasn't a dull moral attitude but seemed to spring from a belief in the value of human beings. Unusual these days.

Arabella's affair with Bruce was going through as many vicissitudes as a barometer in the monsoon season. Maybe I'd have been better that way, instead of repressing my feelings.

One day in the showrooms of Whittington's, a voice said: "Miss Dainton. Do you work here?"

Jack Foil. The stout, middle-aged man whom I'd met with Leigh at that club. Very friendly and polite. Behind their thick lenses, his eyes wobbled like lightly poached eggs. He had been looking at Oriental rugs, he said. And there was a Sung baluster vase catalogued . . . did I know where that was?

I led him to it. "Is it genuine?" he asked.

"No, something has been ground out of the base, probably the reign in which it was made. It wasn't *made* as a forgery, only as a copy. It's probably Yung Chêng. Quite valuable."

"How clever you are. Have you worked here long?"

"Seven years."

He took out a heavy cream silk handkerchief and wiped the outside corners of his eyes with it. It smelled of carnation. He said, "To be frank, Miss Dainton, I don't think I should have recognized you if I hadn't been looking at your portrait the other day."

"Oh," I said, coloring. "You mean Leigh Hartley's painting."

"Yes, it's splendid, isn't it?"

"I haven't seen it."

"Oh, hasn't he let you see it yet? At your next sitting, maybe."

"I think I must be getting on."

"Of course. But I must tell you, I'm very struck with that portrait. The best thing he's done. If you don't want it when it's finished, I've offered him a hundred guineas for it."

I half laughed in surprise and embarrassment. "Really. He'll be pleased, I expect."

"Yes. He's still groping his way. This portrait is the first sign I've seen of an important development."

THE NEXT Friday, the twenty-second of July, I went on my own to see a reissue of the Bergman film, *Wild Strawberries*. As I watched the last few minutes of the secondary film, someone walked along the row and sat next to me. Then the lights came up and the dull discomfort inside me twisted into life.

He said, "I couldn't believe my eyes! Honest I couldn't."

I moved my stick out of his way. I was wearing my old office dress, the gray linen one with the wide green belt.

"Mind if I stay here?" he said.

"As you please." Probably he'd followed me from the office. Be cold, detached, secure, an iron tower in a wind.

Brown suede boots crossed beside me. Dark brown, small-check trousers, a cinnamon shirt and a green knitted tie. No jacket. "It's been hell not seeing you," he said.

People coming in now for the big film. He wants me. But why? There are other women, but no one else'll do. And I?

"You living with your sister all the time now?" he said.

"Yes."

"When do you have your holidays?"



"Week after next."

The lights began to go down.

"Look, Deborah, you think I did you dirt not telling you about Lorne. I *did*. But it was for fear of losing you. I've tried to explain. I thought, if I tell her she'll walk out."

"Perhaps I would have."

"Then what *should* I have done? Tell me."

I sighed. "It's difficult to answer when you—"

"There you are. Look, Deborah, let's go."

"No. I want to see the film."

He subsided, but he put his hand on my arm. I didn't take it away. So we sat through that strange, somber classic. The tension of my half-broken love affair heightened every light and shadow of the film. I felt deeply the loss of an emotionally rich life that had never really been mine.

When it was over he said, "Drive you to Ennismore Gardens?"

"Thank you."

Little red car. Same rattles. When you've been concentrating on the eternal verities, temporary misunderstandings look trivial. It seemed that childhood, maturity, marriage, old age and death were each no more than the turning of a page; and soon it's all gone. Just how big did my doubts loom in this context? A pin drop in a great hall.

When the car stopped he said, "Do me a favor, Deborah. Give me a chance to finish the painting."

"All right."

He took a breath. "Thanks. Can I come for you tomorrow?"

"If you want." I got my stick and went in.

## CHAPTER VII

HE SAID, "I'd like to tell you about Lorne."

"Oh . . . It doesn't matter."

"It matters to me." He painted steadily for a minute. "She'd come from Cork and had got a job as a dentist's receptionist. I had

a toothache and went to the first brass plate I could find. She let me in." He squeezed some paints onto his palette. "She was horribly lonely, see? She couldn't bear London, said people had no friendliness. I suppose it attracted me, her being like that. I was her only friend here. We decided to get married, but living together's different from loving together. We never made it.

"The breakup was partly my fault. I'd always heard of the Irish as being happy, easygoing, careless, like me. She wasn't like that. She was neat, careful. If I'm painting I like to stop when I want to, not when the potatoes are ready. And I like to drop things where I can pick 'em up next day.

"And in those days I wasn't geared down to failure. I expected people to like what I painted, and when they didn't it made me short-tempered. She didn't like that. I don't blame her."

"Generous of you."

He smiled. "Well, I wanted you to know it wasn't some grotty Bohemian affair, it was a genuine marriage that went wrong. We haven't divorced, because she's a Catholic. She left me eighteen months ago and I haven't seen her for twelve."

"Why don't you try again?"

"I don't want to. No more would she."

Later he said, "One more sitting'll do it. Like to see it?"

I slid off the chair and limped to the easel. I couldn't decide whether the girl with the coppery hair and the dark eyes and fair complexion was like me or not. He'd made me look more sexy than I really was. I said, "Did you mean what you said about being geared down to failure?"

"Yes. Nasty medicine, but better to swallow. I don't think my stuff's hopeless. I mean failure in a money sense."

"Hasn't Jack Foil offered you a hundred guineas for this?"

"Who told you?"

"He did. He came into Whittington's. . . . Leigh, I know people who run West End galleries."

He was putting his brushes in turpentine. "I'm afraid of these West End sharks. They're interested in nobody but the latest French discovery or some gimmicky bloke."

"Not these. Of course they run with public taste—they have to. But they'd be absolutely honest with you."

"All right," he said. "And thanks for the interest. That's one certain good thing."

THE MAUD GALLERY was old-fashioned, but its turnover was probably as big as any in London. Lewis Maud was quiet and casual, with no pretensions, no room for theories and schools.

Leigh had brought four paintings. I felt apprehensive, but hopeful and excited. I introduced them and Lewis Maud led us into his office and said, "If you'd be obliging enough to put the paintings on that easel, Mr. Hartley."

Leigh put up a painting of two tugs on the river, a barge, derricks against a cloudy sky, swans in the foreground.

"Yes," said Lewis Maud thoughtfully.

Leigh put up the second one. It was the interior of his littered studio. Light fell through the window, obliquely, cleverly, I thought; dust hung in it.

"Yes," said Maud. "Yes, I see what you mean there."

Leigh took down the two paintings. All around us were rival works: a drawing of an old boat by a modern French painter priced at nine hundred and fifty pounds. A couple of little impressionist paintings of Saint-Tropez, probably worth seven thousand pounds the pair.

Leigh put up a second river scene, a much darker work, almost colorless. There was room on the easel for the last painting, and Leigh put up my portrait. "That's unfinished," he said.

Maud lit a cigarette. "Well, Mr.—er—Hartley, I know you'd want me to be frank, wouldn't you?"

"That's what I came for."

"Well . . . I'm afraid these paintings are not at all in my line."

Leigh stood back and put his hands on his hips, staring at the paintings with a painful air of detachment.

Maud glanced apologetically at me. "If I said that these pictures were not in the tradition of modern painting, you might think I meant modern fashion. I don't. I mean the painter must

have something to say, some original vision. These are no better and no worse than hundreds of other pictures. But they're not really—forgive me—paintings."

"Well," said Leigh, "that's straight enough, isn't it?"

"Look, Mr. Hartley, there are thousands of amateurs who paint for pleasure. It's a wonderful recreation for them. But the professional must have something to say. That's what we look for."

I said, "Isn't it partly a matter of development, of work, of *extending* one's vision . . ."

"If the spark is *there*," Maud said, "then the development, the extending of one's vision is vital. . . . Your portrait has feeling. But it's romantic, old-fashioned in its approach. Look." Maud went to fumble among the stacked canvases and came back with a painting of an old woman lying on a bed. "This painter didn't put down just what he saw. He built her up, bone, flesh, then clothes. She's not just a black design against yellow and blue, but a great heavy lump, pressing down the bed so that you can hear the springs creak. Now, this river scene of yours—do you feel those tugs have got machinery inside them? Can you smell the seaweed and the oil? No. It's the work of an illustrator. . . . Too many people paint, you know."

"Or too many people take themselves seriously," Leigh said. He began to wrap up his paintings.

"Well, yes." Maud turned to me. "Mr. Hartley is modest in his approach. I wish I could help him. So many painters offer me their work, and the worse they are, usually, the more conceited."

"Well," said Leigh. "Glad to have stepped out of the ruck in one respect anyhow."

I'd thought he would refuse to see Arthur Hays, but with a sort of grim patience he went along. Mr. Hays was more polished than Lewis Maud. His response to the four paintings was suaver, but it was equally dismissive. We came out silently and walked back to the little car.

"Definitely," Leigh said, "they don't recognize genius."

"I'm sorry," I said miserably.

"Not to worry. That painting of you, in a hundred years it will

be in the Louvre and be called the Mona Deborah, and beginners will try to fathom the secret of its smile. Cup of tea?"

We had tea in a café in Piccadilly. He sat silent.

I said, "I'm sorry I took you. But we're no worse off . . ."

"Well, thanks for the 'we.'"

In fact, we *were* worse off. No one is the better for having his work damned. And I'd so hoped there was something there.

The following week I was to join Erica in Ireland, and there were things to do, washing and ironing. I had intended to leave him after the interviews. Now I couldn't.

He said, "I think I'll get away for a bit if you're going away. To Paris and Rome, look around. I've never been abroad."

"Can you afford it?"

"If I sell this portrait to Jack Foil."

We got up. "Do me a favor?" he said. "Come home and let's cook a meal. We could pick up some food on the way."

I knew I should say no, but I felt too sorry for him. We bought a chicken and some vegetables, fruit and cheese, and drove to Rotherhithe. The studio was tidier than usual—Friday was the day he had a charwoman—and with the lights on and the curtains drawn we shut out the wet evening.

As soon as that was done he began to kiss me. He buried his head in my shoulder and we held each other tight, as if for comfort, for protection against the hostile world.

Presently we had drinks, and I went into the kitchen to prepare the chicken. A few minutes later I heard a thudding noise and limped out to find him breaking up his canvases.

I shouted, "Leigh! Don't! Stop it! Stop it!"

He shook his head as if to clear it. The picture he held in his hand he resignedly skimmed across the room. "Hell, I have to have one show of temper, don't I?"

"But that's no good at all. Come and help me. I want to try a fricassee of chicken."

In the kitchen he put his face in his hands. "God, this is an all-time zero for me." I poured him another drink. He swallowed it at a draft. "Picture of the artist wallowing in self-pity."

"Haven't you always preached the virtues of courage and perseverance to me?"

He put down his glass. "On target. Bang on target."

I put my head on his shoulder. "Sorry, I know how you feel."

The cooking came off well. We had a bottle of wine with it. "Just *tell* me something," he said as we ate. "Am I a failure in the other big way? With the girl I love?"

I sipped at the wine. "How should I answer that?"

"Truthfully. On the chin."

"And if I said yes?"

"I reckon I'd jump in the river."

"Well, you can stay out of the river." My heart was thumping.

"Really? Really, Deborah?" The tight creases in his face changed and lifted. "That makes a lot of things worthwhile."

"What sort of things?"

"Breathing for one." I laughed. He said, "Stay here tonight."

I looked at my wineglass . . . You're twenty-six, I told myself; you know your own mind; say no, before he gets the wrong impression. Sleeping with him, you, a cripple; you must be insane even to think of it . . .

"Deborah," he said. "Please . . ."

This isn't love, this violent passion, taking the breath, making the blood drum-beat. Put it off. In a month, two months. Put it off. Not now.

"Deborah," he said, gray eyes darker with need.

Well, all I had to do was say no.

"If you want me to stay," I said, "I'll stay."

MAYBE WE'RE all egoists and think our experience is different, whereas really it's only one of a million million variations on the same theme. That I was lame and withered and innocent only added and subtracted shades of meaning to a first experience. It's probably not unusual that our lovemaking should have been emotionally taut, exciting, nervously exhausting and inexpert. (Although I knew so little, I knew instinctively now that he had not had much to do with women.) Nor can it be unusual that

later in the night, with the shaded light still burning—shaded by a tea cloth that later we found blackened by the heat of the bulb—and in the drowsy, bittersweet warmth, urges rewoke and completion came to us.

The following morning, after breakfast, he drove me to a telephone box and I rang Sarah. To my relief she had come home late and had thought me asleep in my room. I said I'd been visiting a friend, and would be home tonight. She said in a casual voice, "You're all right, Deborah?" And I said, "I'm fine, darling."

It was a lovely day with a warm wind directing the clouds like traffic past the sun, and when we got back we sat on the balcony in deck chairs. Very little moved on the river. It was like being in a foreign city. He said, "D'you *have* to go to Ireland tomorrow?"

"I've booked a flight."

"Scrub it. Come somewhere with me instead."

"Erica is counting on me."

"I'm afraid of your hygienic, dehydrated medical family. Once you get back among 'em you'll discover it's an intellectual error to have an affair with an unlettered clod like me."

"Don't you think I've a mind of my own?"

"That's what I'm afraid of."

We had lunch on the terrace: cold chicken, with cheese and grapes and wine. The feeling of being relaxed and high-spirited and uncaring was new to me. We laughed, and loved with our eyes, and the sun was warm and the grapes were sweet. If one could stay like this, allowing all the physical instincts their proper place! Some people went through life that way—and made a mess of it. But was it more of a mess than when one tried to live entirely by reason? Was there no happy mean, where one need be neither overcivilized nor the complete savage?

I decided to wire Erica to say I was not coming to Ireland.

THAT EVENING Leigh drove me to Sarah's flat. I told her that I was going with Leigh to Spain.

She pursed her lips as if to whistle and then didn't. "D'you want me to help you pack?"

"I—want to tell you more about it; and yet I don't want to. That's irrational, isn't it?"

"You want female counsel without the great Dainton brain?"

"Yes! . . . Oh, darling, yes, I do . . ."

She got up. "First, you look as if you need a cup of tea."

While she was gone, I sat down and kicked off my shoes, the heavy one and the light one, and put my feet up on another chair and stared at them. The fact that they didn't match seemed for the first time ever not to matter.

When she came back I told her the rest.

She said, "What does he intend, to get a divorce?"

"At the moment I'm trying not to plan. All my life things have been planned. Now I'm going to live from day to day."

"That's Arabella's way, not yours," Sarah said thoughtfully. "Arabella will have a broken heart six times before she's our age, and it'll mend quick as a wink. You feel things more. You're the type to sink in deep and nearly drown. So if you play this Arabella's way, you ought to try to keep to her rules . . ." She stopped. "Have you the least idea what I'm trying to say?"

"You're telling me not to get too involved, just in case."

"Yes. It's a *precaution*, Deb, like fastening your seat belt. I *like* him; I'm only suggesting you should watch yourself."

I patted her hand. "Maybe I am already too involved, Sarah. How d'you measure out love? By the spoonful or the square yard? But I'm going in with my eyes open."

#### CHAPTER VIII

WE FLEW TO Gibraltar and hired a little car there. The following day we drove along the coast toward Cádiz. We stopped at a motel about five miles north of Tarifa, on a three-mile stretch of almost empty beach. It was hot, but a strong breeze blew off the Atlantic and the sea was white with surf. I'd refused to buy a bathing costume in Gibraltar, but Leigh had bought two for me. I bathed about four times a day.



I'd never imagined it would be possible in August to find so quiet a place. At breakfast on the balcony one morning I asked Leigh how he had heard of it.

He said, "Jack Foil. He came this way last year."

"D'you mean he knows we've come here now?"

"No, I remembered what he'd said. Deborah—" His smile was half a frown in the bright light. "I've been thinking about your leg. D'you have to wear that built-up shoe? I've watched you walk to the sea, no shoes, no stick. You limp less, you do really."

"I walk on my toes, that's why."

"Why not try that with an ordinary shoe?"

"I haven't any normal shoes. I was told they would throw my spine off balance."

"Wasn't that when you were growing up, though? I can't see why they'd put you off balance if they made you limp less. Let's drive into Cádiz and buy a pair."

"I'll come for the drive."

"You'll come for the shoes."

We traveled over the long empty road, broken only by the occasional clump of pines, the white-walled farm, the advertisement for sherry. On the way I said, "Leigh, we've been away five days and you haven't let me pay for anything. That's ridiculous."

"It's the principle of the thing."

"I thought you claimed not to have principles."

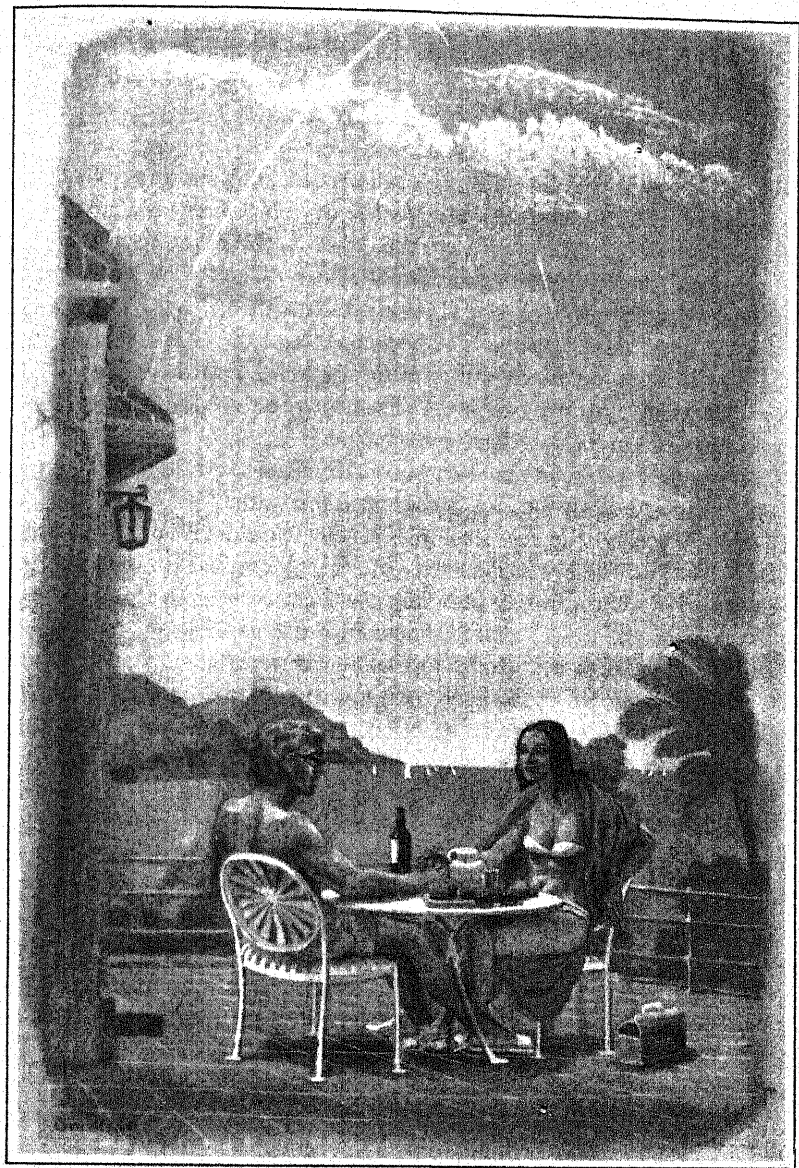
"I've my own set, see. I'd never mind pinching a tiara—but I don't take a girl on a holiday and expect it to be a Dutch treat."

"It's as much my pleasure as it is yours."

"That's the nicest thing you've ever said to me, Deborah."

We parked in a square in the center of Cádiz. Then we wandered down the narrow slits of streets and found a shoe shop. The shoes were cheap and of good style and quality. I bought two pairs, though I was convinced I'd not be able to wear them.

After lunch we drove to the beach. Leigh bathed, but I wouldn't because this beach was crowded. We went back for tea in the town, and I said, "Leigh, there was a good man's shop near the shoe shop. Let me buy you something."



We bought two sweaters, a pair of beach trousers, shorts, a jacket in fine blue wool. Leigh said, "I reckon you're taking me in hand, aren't you? These clothes. A bit less jukebox. You'll never make a silk purse out of me, you know."

"I'm not trying. I like you as you are."

Driving home, he said, "Deborah, this flop in my painting—well, it's altered us. I was always the one in charge, telling you to do new things with your leg, rise above it. But now, in a way, I'm crippled—in my chosen job. That failure meant a lot to me, and well . . . now we're on equal terms. D'you think you'd have come away with me if that hadn't happened?"

"I didn't come away with you out of pity," I said.

"No, but I think it had some effect on you, like feeling you were helping me instead of just being helped—"

"Leigh, I swore when I came on this holiday not to think, just to enjoy myself, to be. I don't want *you* to start!"

We watched the sun sink into a raft of cloud floating over the sea. The old ramparts of Cádiz were black against the vanilla sky. A sense of contentment, knowing we'd eat dinner in the little restaurant of the motel, drink wine while the candles guttered, and then go across to our chalet to make love.

We'd come to know each other with an intimacy that I still found not quite believable, but in thought we were infinitely apart. One day we were talking about Whittington's. I told him of an Italian who had asked them to offer for sale three Tiepolo sketches which, it turned out, he had stolen in Rome. While they were examining these he had stolen six small English watercolors which were on view. He took them back to Rome and put them up for auction there. Only someone's quick eye and the intervention of Interpol had prevented the double swindle.

Leigh was disgusted, not because the Italian had tried to cheat us, but because he had done it so badly. He brooded. "I suppose you often get things stolen?"

"Very, very little. A careful watch is kept."

We were lying on the sand, under beach umbrellas. "From here," I said, "Tarifa looks like a medieval Moorish town."

"I wonder how often it's been pillaged and burned," he said. "Maybe that's what I was meant to be, a pirate." Suddenly he said roughly, "Why should I be given an urge to paint and no talent to satisfy it! I wish I *could* turn pirate! God, I wish I could!"

Most times I forgot my deformity in his forgetting of it. In ordinary shoes, I had thought I should wag from side to side as some lame people do, but I found that I was able to take the weight on the ball of my foot without the heel quite touching the ground, and I didn't seem to need the stick so much.

So ten days went by. Leigh had run out of money and I was able to use some of my traveler's checks. By now I was so much in love with him—sexually in chains—that I would have married him anytime. But that he should be under any obligation to me as a result of my coming to Spain was unthinkable. I had come because I wanted to. And there was no offending self-confidence in his attitude to me; he never took me for granted.

IT ALL became more difficult once we returned to England. The evening after we came back I went to Hampstead. Back to childhood, back to maidenhood, when I'd spent long nights reading about life instead of living it. I let myself in. Erica had just had her hair done. She looked more feminine.

"Deborah, how nice! Have you eaten?"

"Yes, thanks. How are you both?"

"Very well. Are you staying tonight?"

"Not tonight."

"You're very *brown*. Wasn't it far too hot?"

"Not by the sea."

Douglas said, "A glass of port to say welcome home?"

"Thank you."

"You're walking without your stick?" Erica said.

"Only partly. I can manage better than I used to."

We sat down. Douglas came over with the port.

"You mustn't overtax the muscles of that leg," Erica said. "You were told you could only develop them to a certain degree, and beyond that they'd be likely to let you down."

"I'll risk it."

Douglas said, "No one has ever fully assessed the mind-body correlation. Remarkable things happen for which there's no medical explanation."

"I'm trying a new way of walking. I got into the way of it while I was bathing."

"You bathed?" said Douglas. "Better still. In Spain I suppose it's different."

"There are a lot of cripples, yes," I agreed.

"My dear," said Erica, "Douglas didn't mean that at all—"

"I meant," my father said, looking at me with his frank blue eyes, "to be pleased you were going in the sea. If I put it badly, I'm sorry."

I stayed till ten thirty. Then Erica said, "When do you think of coming back?"

"I haven't quite decided. I'll be at Sarah's."

"She's coming on Sunday with Philip. Why don't you come?"

"With Leigh?"

There was a silence. "If he would like it."

"I'll ask him."

I WENT back to live in Sarah's flat, making the excuse to Leigh that it was difficult to get to Whittington's each day from Rotherhithe. He protested, but I felt I *had* to live separately from him for a while, to get my bearings.

One night he told me he'd taken a job as a bus conductor.

"D'you need money that badly?"

"Well, soon will."

"Have you any time to paint at all?"

"Does it matter?"

I blamed myself for taking him to the galleries. I felt I had helped to destroy him. And living separately was constantly raising problems, of meeting, of parting afterwards.

Then, for the first time, he said he wished we could get married. I looked at him, trying to see how serious he was, and he added that Lorne, being a Catholic, would never divorce him.

But, I said, if she left *him*, might it not be possible to divorce *her*—for desertion.

"If only I could . . . Anyway, I'll find out."

The next evening he met me with a wry face. "I went to a lawyer at lunchtime. She has to have been gone two years before you can file a what's-it for desertion?"

"Well, isn't it eighteen months already?"

"Nearly. But it means over a year more before the thing's sewn up. Meantime I've got to put on an act of wanting her back."

"Would she?"

"Not a chance. But the solicitor said it might be worth having her watched. Expensive, but if we could prove adultery—"

The following Saturday night Leigh took me to a pub where a group called the Sunspots were playing. The pub was enormous but so crowded that it was nearly impossible to move or speak. He took my hand and began to hack a way through the crowd. I thought, don't get scared of being closed in, forget claustrophobia. Somebody's shoulder, somebody's back . . . The beat and howl of amplified trumpet and electric guitar.

Then we saw Ted Sandymount and Jack Foil. Ted, waved, and we fought our way towards their table. It was just tolerable there. Ted gave me a seat facing Jack Foil. Thick lips smiling. Shouting: "Miss Dainton! Nice to see you." He turned to Leigh.

There were broken bottles underfoot. A barman was squeezing through, trying to collect empty glasses.

". . . music?" Jack Foil shouted at me. "D'you like it?"

"Yes, love it."

"Youth. I feel very old. What the young like, I suppose."

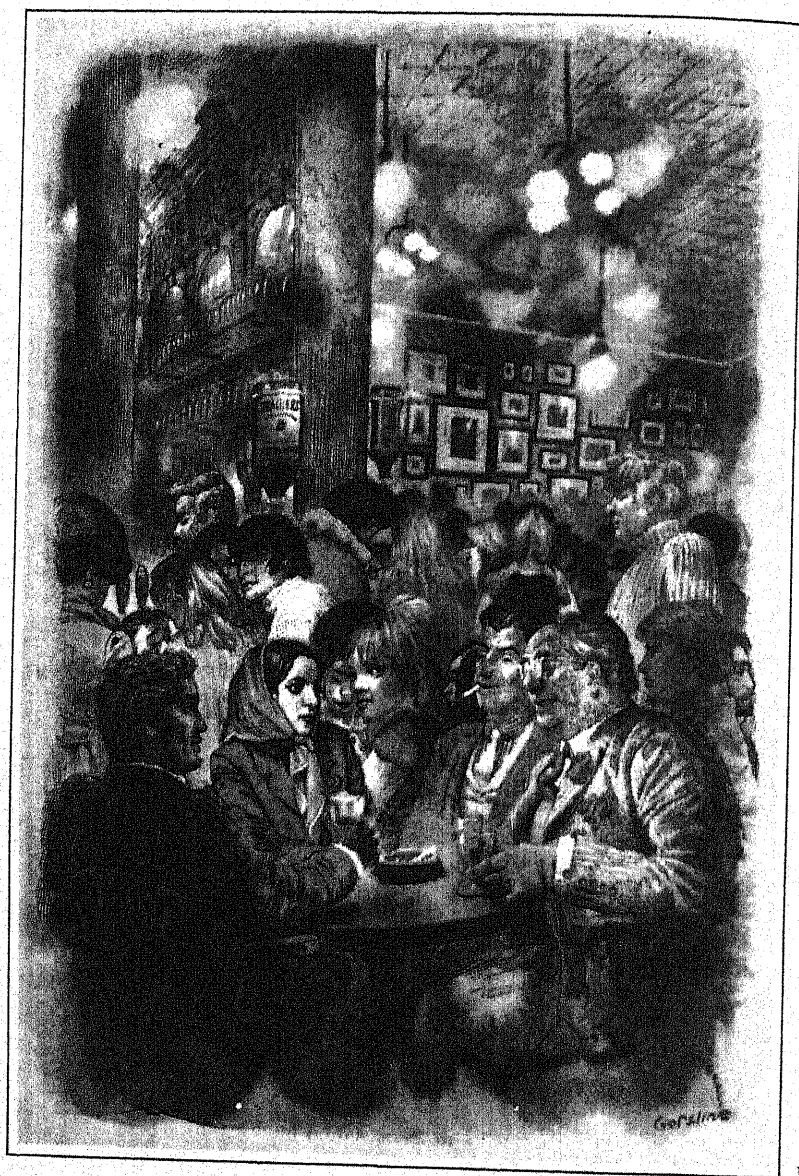
The Sunspots reached a crescendo and crashed into silence. Leigh had moved away and was talking to two pretty girls.

". . . worried about Leigh," Jack Foil said. "Look on him like a nephew. Still think he can paint. Crazy for such a talented kid to spend his life on the platform of a bus."

"I hope he'll get something better."

"A part-time job," said Mr. Foil. "I'll think of something."

"D'you mean working for you?"



"Well, or something."

Leigh was making rather a fuss of one of the girls. This twist in my stomach—jealousy?

On the way home I told Leigh what Jack Foil had said. A curious expression crossed his face. "Well, I've done odd jobs for him before. He's got lots of irons in the fire."

"What sort?"

"Well . . . among other things, he's a fence."

"A fence? He buys stolen property?"

"Yes. Don't ever tell anyone, will you?"

"Is that how you've worked for him?"

"Well, it's handy for him to have someone like me who can act as messenger boy. Dead easy and no risk."

"Leigh," I said, "there must be something more worth doing than being errand boy to a crook."

When we reached Sarah's flat, he said, "When are you going to cut this out and come and live with me?"

"Isn't this the best arrangement for the present?"

"Not for me, it's not."

PHILIP CALLED one evening before Sarah came in, and I asked him about divorce for desertion. He said: "It's *three* years, Deborah, before he can file a petition. I happen to have been reading it up for a case."

When I told Leigh this, he admitted he had lied to me.

"But why?" I said. "It doesn't make sense."

"I thought you might feel you couldn't wait that long."

"But I was bound to find out sooner or later!"

"Yes, but later it wouldn't matter so much. It would be nearer the time then, wouldn't it?"

"D'you know," I said, "I can't *bear* you to lie to me. It puts all our—our relationship in question."

"I'm sorry, love. I'm that afraid of losing you."

"But don't you see—this is the way you *would* lose me. Unless there's honesty between us, and trust, there can't be anything."

"I'm sorry," he said. "Maybe I'll learn in time."



CHAPTER IX

WHITTINGTON's asked me to go to Norfolk, to see a valuable collection of china and porcelain in a Victorian mansion that was up for sale. Grant Stokes came with me to see furniture. We drove up in his car, taking overnight things since it was a two-day job, and got there about eleven a.m.

A Mr. and Mrs. Bustard had just inherited the place and were going for a quick sale. He looked like something smooth and well pressed in finance, she had blond hair and hard ice-blue eyes. Both were full of patronizing goodwill.

My mouth watered at the sight of the display shelves of Doulton and Sèvres and Dresden. I started on the Doulton, but at once began to sense something wrong and soon knew it for a forgery. The next group—lovely Dresden figures—were the same. By lunchtime I had not found a single genuine piece. By six I was in a bit of a panic. All the showpieces were forgeries.

It's very awkward when this happens. For years these pieces had been giving pleasure to their owners, and so long as they remained in a showcase, they fulfilled the same purpose as genuine pieces. But once they came into the market their value and charm were destroyed in the eyes of their owners. No man who has thought a thing genuine can prize it when he knows it's imitation. And often the owners don't appreciate being told.

Mr. and Mrs. Bustard did not. When I explained that the entire collection had been specially manufactured as copies, all in the same French factory about 1880, and that the lot was worthless, they became thoroughly unpleasant and cast doubts on my competence. Grant Stokes backed me up, but he couldn't speak with authority about porcelain. The furniture, he told them, was fairly good.

We went on working through the evening. About ten o'clock, in a cupboard upstairs, I found an exquisite porcelain statuette—a Chinaman with a disproportionately big brown dog. I had come on a treasure at last. That one piece of genuine early

Meissen—a perfect specimen of which perhaps only four were ever made—took much of the sting out of the rest.

We didn't get back to London until seven the following day. Grant Stokes dropped me at Sarah's flat, and I saw that my father's Vauxhall was parked outside. As I let myself in, I realized I'd left my gloves in Grant Stokes's car, and this took my mind off "coo-eeing" to Sarah that I was back. I went into the kitchen to prop my stick in a corner, and heard my father's voice through the sitting-room door.

"Erica feels that she's not like you and Arabella. She's delicate and handicapped and that makes her more of a charge on us."

Sarah said, "I think you're wrong to look on her as delicate. She's tough. When has she ailed, apart from the polio?"

Douglas said, "Oh, I agree. But one wonders how far stamina is impaired. Is she his mistress?"

"I've no idea. It's not my business to ask, is it?"

"Oh, no. I thought she might be open about it, that's all." I tried to move silently away. Douglas said, "Erica's concerned. She persists in trying to worry me."

"I honestly can't see why she should be so worried."

"Well, a pregnancy. Has Deborah sought advice from you?"

"Hardly! Strange as you may think it, I've had no experience!"

"Oh, I'm sorry, Sarah, I didn't mean that. I meant that you're medically qualified. It would be rather a reflection on us all . . . I suppose Hartley can't marry her, even if he wanted to."

I got back to the door of the flat, trying to breathe quietly.

"Have you seen the wife?"

"I hardly know Leigh even," Sarah said.

Douglas said, "I wonder if *she's* in any way handicapped. Of course Deborah is very pretty, but most men would sheer off. The odd man who doesn't may find her bad leg fascinating. Deformity fetishism . . ." His cool, clinical voice followed me out of the door. ". . . Men of that type are usually unsatisfactory as husbands. There tends to be inadequacy in their characters . . ."

I quietly closed the door. Down in the street I raised a hand to a prowling taxi.

IT WAS THE FIRST TIME I had ever gone to him uninvited. He was surprised and delighted; then he saw my face.

"Darling, what's the matter? Was it your family?"

"Don't ask me. I'd rather not talk about it now."

"But you'll stay?"

"Yes."

"Permanently?"

"I don't know." I sighed. "Do you have a shift tomorrow?"

"Deborah, I'm out of a job. I got the sack on Monday. I wanted to tell you, but I hoped I'd have something by now."

"What happened?"

"It was one of these rush hours. I grabbed a man and shoved him off. He complained about me."

"Oh, I'm *sorry*."

Next morning Leigh was up and out before I woke. When he came back he said he thought Jack Foil would help.

"In what way, though?"

"Don't fret, he's never been in trouble with the police."

"I don't like it," I said. "I wonder sometimes . . ."

"You *think* too much," he said. "D'you remember what you said in Spain? Just be. That's the only answer to life. Really."

A LONELY district. No neighbors—except the great warehouses—and ten minutes' walk to the nearest shop. Everyone I saw there seemed respectable, moderately prosperous. The shops were one-story, personal, friendly. "Jims' Pie Shop." "Martin's For Meat." I had imagined Rotherhithe to be a slum area with wicked lascars and dark deeds by the docks. Anything but.

After three weeks there, I had got used to the busy journey to Piccadilly, buying food on the way home, cooking for Leigh, the companionship and demands of love. Much of the time I was happy. He seemed younger than his age because of his boyish sense of adventure. He spent money freely, but had accepted that I pay for our food. He hadn't found a job, but I knew he was seeing a lot of Jack Foil.

I felt relatively little anger against Douglas. Or if it was there

it transformed itself into a deeper commitment to Leigh. I felt more than ever that I had to help him make something of his life. Married or not, we were partners working towards a common end: my realization of myself, his realization of himself.

We had only one near quarrel, when I told Leigh of discovering the piece of Meissen among all the fake in the Norfolk house. He was thoughtful. "Where was this piece?"

"At the back of a cupboard."

"Would the owners know they had it?"

"Oh, I shouldn't think so. There was so much junk."

"How much d'you think it will fetch?"

"Not less than two thousand pounds."

"Oh, my God! Hadn't you a bag?"

"Of course. But what . . ."

"You could have slipped it into your case! What a chance!"

I said angrily, "I obviously need an awful lot of educating!"

"Maybe you do," he said. Then, "Sorry, Deborah, I didn't mean it. But we could have got seven or eight hundred pounds from Jack Foil for it. And nobody would ever have known."

"I would have known. You would. Doesn't that count?"

"D'you think being free of money problems for a while would have made us think any worse of ourselves?"

I picked up a scattered newspaper and began folding it. "I've worked for Whittington's for over seven years. Don't you think I owe them honesty—even if I don't owe it to myself?"

"But you wouldn't have been stealing from *them*—or at least only a bit of commission. It would have done nobody any harm."

"I'm sorry! It is something we shall never agree on."

We spent an evening in Jack Foil's flat, over his antique shop in Old Brompton Road. As soon as we pressed the doorbell, dogs yapped as if the electricity had been connected to their tails. Jack opened the door and we went in between potted plants and two fat dachshunds, to a long darkish room lit with lamps in black drum shades.

Wife about thirty; bleached hair on shoulders, tired blue eyes, good figure, wearing a size-ten frock. She needed a twelve.

"Plants are my hobby," said Jack Foil, taking my elbow. "This is an umbrella tree—nice, don't you think? D'you take whisky or gin? . . . Sherry, Doreen. This they call Mother-in-law's tongue—ha, ha!—long and wagging. Leigh, whisky? Down, Rufus! They get excited. Let me look at your shoes, Miss Dainton . . . Ah, no laces. Rufus chews them. Is Dr. Sarah Dainton your sister? She comes in the shop sometimes. Charming. Sit beside me and tell me what you think of this rug. You recognize it? Ha, ha! I was looking at it that day in Whittington's."

Dark hair on the back of his hands, like fur. Smell of carnation. He looked sinister, yet homely. A stout, heavy man of fifty, with his dachshunds at his feet. Plants giving an underwater look to the room, and a blond corseted young wife flirting with Leigh. Sherry dry and fine, Corona smoke, settee too soft, enveloping. Careful. No claustrophobia.

"Yes, Mr. Foil," I said, "and is that a Stanley Spencer on the wall?" Are these pictures all stolen? And that handsome diamond on your wife's finger? What risk is Leigh running in your company? Isn't he *basically* too well balanced . . .

"Leigh tells me you're going to be married, Miss Dainton. There are obstacles, but they can be removed . . . Oh, yes, I knew her slightly. She wasn't his type. Leigh's an elite sort of chap, in spite of coming from a simple home. Deserves somebody like you, Miss Dainton, if I may say so."

Genuine benevolence? Leigh was not at ease in his company. Less pugnacious, less jolly, more concerned to please.

LEIGH GOT work in a warehouse. One day he confessed to me he owed Jack Foil five hundred pounds. I was appalled and wanted to help him to pay it back. I had saved about four hundred pounds. He said, "Sweetheart, can I take from you the cash I spent courting you? I know you want to help, and in some ways you can, but not *that* way!"

I never used a stick, now. I'd left it in a cupboard at Whittington's. Leigh was encouraging me to dance: he had a record player and we tried in the studio. He wanted me to go with him to a

dance hall. "Darling," I said, "it isn't so much that I'm afraid of people saying, 'Look at that freak.' I'm afraid of their saying, 'Look at that brave girl.'"

"You care too much what people think."

One or two weekends we went out of London and he let me drive the car. I got into it pretty quickly, and I applied for a test.

AT WHITTINGTON'S the big autumn sales were coming up, and I brought home a stack of catalogues. He thumbed through them.

"What a packet of folding money there must be in all this stuff! Hundreds of thousands of quid in your showrooms!"

It was swan-feeding time, and we went out on the balcony in the evening light. The water had a slightly pink glow. "We ought to go into business," he said, "as junk dealers. You with your honesty, me with my knavery. We'd be an unbeatable team."

"D'you know that's not a bad idea? We *might* open an antique shop. I know almost as much as anybody about china and porcelain. You understand painting. . . ."

The swans were coming downriver; four fully grown and six cygnets; they maneuvered so they could grab the bread we offered. "What do we use for money?" he said.

"I don't know. But it's worth thinking about."

"We'd need three thousand pounds, I'd think, to get started properly and to buy in a bit of stock. I could ask Jack Foil."

"Don't. Perhaps I can think of something."

Before, there hadn't been any future. This was a solution, only just out of reach.

ON NOVEMBER third I came home to find our balcony piled with wooden cases, cartons stuffed with straw, old chairs, old clothes, a moth-eaten feather boa. Leigh laughed at my expression. "This is the beginning of our antique shop, mate."

"No, seriously! Tell me."

"Well, you said you wanted a bonfire for Guy Fawkes Day, so I asked one of the dockmasters. They don't mind. I've got a bunch of fireworks. Other people are bringing theirs."

I laughed. "What other people?"

"Lay off, I'm giving the party. It's your birthday party as well—a week early."

Guy Fawkes Day was a Saturday. We spent all day getting ready. I made a female Guy out of the old clothes. Leigh started building the bonfire at about four when the river ebbed.

The night was a bit windy and overcast but not cold. By six we could see lights flickering over the city and docks, a few rockets and flashes. At six thirty, Arabella came with a young man—not Bruce Spring. Then several other people, including two I'd met at Ted Sandymount's. Then Ted, blinking and twitching. Sarah came with Philip Bartholomew and David Hambro. When I saw my father and mother I glanced at Leigh half in anger; then I was welcoming them as if I'd expected them all the time. Douglas and Erica were never bad partygoers, and they entered into the thing. I'd never been allowed fireworks at home. Now they said they found them "tremendous fun," particularly in the setting of London River.

It was beautiful. We started off with rockets fired from bottles; then I lighted the bonfire, and everyone sang "Happy Birthday" in the dark, spark-blowing night and drank my health and bit into sausage rolls. The fire was mirrored in metallic gray and green and orange in the lapping river. The pyre was soon a mass of flame leaping up to the feather-boa'd witch on the top.

A cruising riverboat flashed its searchlight over us; a great rocket flowered, silhouetting Tower Bridge. The witch sagged and tottered, flames licking, and fell sideways upon the stones. Her hat struck the water, hissed and floated away. I looked up and saw Mr. and Mrs. Jack Foil standing beside Douglas and Erica on the balcony.

The tide turned and was lapping at our feet. We had had our fun, it told us; time to go. Into the studio we crowded. Clink of bottles; Leigh passing by me: "O.K., love?" "O.K.—devil." Loving smiles between us. I love him, would die for him. Schemer, treating me like a juvenile. I'll show him.

Everyone talking at once. My father's voice: "Obsessional

morality in Victorian and Edwardian days . . ." "Pyorrhea," said Mrs. Foil close by me. A hand on my arm. "Darling, a lovely party," Arabella said. "Who's the new man?" I asked her. "Benjy." "But Bruce?" "Oh, things went sour."

People going. Met Leigh's eyes. Go now, everyone. "Thank you. Delighted you came." "Yes, wasn't it fun?" "Glad you came, Erica." "Good-by, Douglas." "Mr. Foil . . . well, Jack then. Thank you." Revving of engines, laughter, slammed doors. The room a shambles. Cigarette smoke and butts, empty glasses, empty bottles, burned-out Roman candles in a jar.

We stood a moment and smiled at each other, then laughed. We met and kissed, still laughing. In the wreckage of the party we made love, with a sort of deep fundamental affection of which desire was only a part. I know it happened like that. Though it never happened like that again.

IN THE breathing dark of the night he said, "You awake?"

"Yes, why?"

"I been thinking."

"What is it, darling?"

"I've been asked to ask you something and don't dare."

I giggled. "I can't *imagine* anything you wouldn't dare—"

"This is serious. Somebody like Jack Foil, not Jack but somebody like him—wants information about Whittington's."

Silence. "What d'you mean? What sort of information?"

"The sort of precautions that are taken at night."

"Somebody wants to break in?"

"It's being considered."

Silence. I lay very still.

He said, "I don't know how they've come to think of you . . ."

"Well, just tell them no," I said.

"No one else they know has an inside on Whittington's."

"Good. Tell them to try Sotheby's instead."

"Whittington's is the place they've got in mind, see. Of course . . . there'd be money in it for us."

Stare up into the dark. Voice and body beside me. Can be



heard and touched and deeply loved, but . . . "You're not seriously suggesting I should do it?"

"I've been saying to myself, I've no right to ask her, then thinking, it'd be five hundred. The beginning of a nest egg."

"Oh, Leigh, stop it! Don't be so utterly silly!"

"I know. It sounded plumb crazy to me at first. But it is easy money for so little. I reckon Whittington's is insured?"

"Well, of course." Silence for a while. "When was the proposition put to you?"

"Last night."

"At the party? Jack Foil?"

"Someone bigger than him."

"Leigh, have you got mixed up with a gang or something?"

"No. Not that. Only people I know."

"Darling, they don't know *me*. If they're so silly as to think—well, that's excusable. But for *you* to think it . . . !"

He said, "I'm *sorry*, Deb. I knew how you'd feel and yet . . . It's so difficult for the likes of me. *You* get a proposition like this—you chuck it out. *I* get one—and it sticks. It makes you much better than me—"

"Oh, rubbish—"

"Well, it does. We come from different ways of living. Mum died early. Dad had three sons to bring up. All my life I've seen Dad *scraping*. *You* haven't a clue what that means. When you were short of money it meant you couldn't afford a luxury. When we were short, we couldn't afford a necessity. I had to wear my older brother's clothes, when they were threadbare. *Always* the cheapest food. Everything fifth-rate. I swore when I grew up I'd not live like that. So money means different to me."

I began to feel sick. "And . . . you'd like me to give information to thieves who want to break into my firm which trusts me—for five hundred pounds? You want me to betray them for that?"

"Oh . . . forget I spoke!" He turned away, sighing.

"I can't, Leigh. Do you? I want to know."

He said, "This business of honesty. Who's honest and who isn't? You are, love; but who else? Look at that lord who owned

half Rotherhithe. His great-grandfather was a dirty moneylender who bought property here. His grandfather and his father were slum landlords, squeezing their tenants while they lived in a great house and owned a yacht. Then the property is blitzed and condemned, so he sells it to a development company for six hundred thousand pounds. Is that more honest than the Great Train Robbers? Who caused the most suffering?"

I took his hand. "You can always justify yourself if you point your finger at others. It's only yourself you can judge."

He took his hand away. "You sound like a parson."

"No, like a prig. You don't give me much choice, do you?"

"I'm sorry, I'm sorry. Forget I ever spoke."

There was silence. Then a clock chimed the quarter hour.

I said, "Forgive me, darling. Of course I was lucky, brought up in comfortable surroundings. But there are things I can't see myself doing under *any* circumstances. You're a much more generous, open, enthusiastic person than I am—*kinder*, more thoughtful. But when you ask me to cheat the firm I work for—nothing doing. It's as if someone asked me to cheat *you*!"

#### CHAPTER X

NEXT MORNING I was up early, trying to make order of the chaos before he woke. When he did he was pleasant but cool. What he'd asked was a lead weight in my stomach all day. However much we loved, we might have belonged to different worlds.

On Monday I deliberately stayed late at Whittington's. Home by bus. Nearly eight. He wasn't in. When I was late we usually ate out. I poured myself a drink and waited.

He came in at nine. "Hello, love. Been waiting? Sorry."

"There's only eggs and bacon, will that do?"

"I've—eaten a bit. You eat and I'll have a cup of tea."

Pleasant, but *cool*. I made tea, buttered a couple of crackers and put cheese on them. Then I asked how they had taken my refusal.

He blinked. "Oh, *that* . . ."

"I suppose they didn't like it?"

"No, they didn't," he said. "Not much."

"What did they say?"

"They asked me to ask you to think again."

"And what did you say? That you would?"

"Yes." He looked at me steadily. Queer look. Somber. "Yes, I said I'd ask you to think again."

"Why? Why make it worse?"

"I was trying not to. It isn't easy to say no."

"Why not? You owe them nothing. Or do you? Is Jack Foil pressing you for his money?"

He got up, thrusting back his chair so that it screeched. "Jack's a receiver, not a blackmailer. He's my friend."

"And the others?"

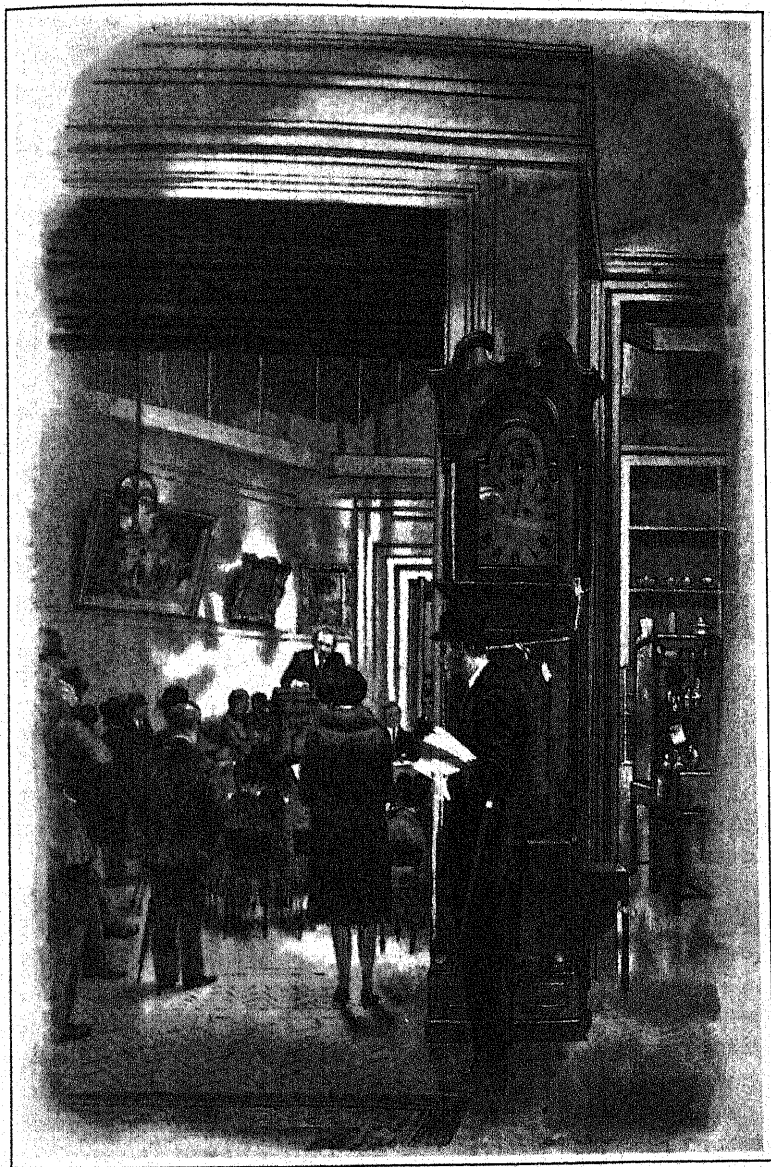
"They weren't very friendly today."

"But this . . . this is a form of blackmail—"

"Oh, it's not as bad as that. Nobody's going to be beaten up. But this is a tough world, Deborah, as soon as you get out of the nice little suburbs. It's not easy for me to say no just like that. I've got to think. And so have you. I said I'd let them know definite by next Sunday."

ON WEDNESDAY there was a big miscellaneous sale at Whittington's which really took off. People bid quickly, they bid against each other at the right times. Prices rocketed.

The Meissen piece fetched four thousand pounds. An American paid thirty-seven hundred pounds for a tiny jade toucan, which he said was a Christmas present for his fiancée. Two or three of the less reputable dealers were there, working in collusion, but private interference was so great that they couldn't do much to control the prices. Money flowed like milk. One of Shaw's Prefaces, signed by the author, went for ten thousand pounds. Money, money. Of course I could see what Leigh meant. The hideous discrepancy. His father battling for his raise of twelve-and-six a week. Leigh saw no harm in trying to persuade



me to sell a little information for a sum that represented twelve-and-six a week for sixteen years—tax-free.

With a little effort one could probably produce a case for doing what Leigh wanted. Nobody would come to any harm. One of the vast insurance companies might pay a little of their profits. . . . But Deborah Dainton couldn't do it. Not if she wanted to go on living with herself. But what if she wanted to go on living with Leigh?

He was a bit strange all week, not moody or short-tempered, but it was as if I had damaged our relationship.

On Thursday he said, "I'll go and tell them tonight that it's no sale. That satisfy you?"

"Yes."

"You don't sound as if it does."

"How can I be satisfied," I said, nearly crying, "unless I feel you agree with me?"

"I honestly don't know what I agree with. I know it's a hell of a thing to ask you to do. But it's choosing between two things, isn't it, and neither of 'em's good."

I bit at my finger. "D'you want me to leave you?"

"I thought we were going to get married."

"So did I. But this . . ."

He put his hands up to his face. "Why the hell did this ever come up? I'll go now. Don't wait supper."

He went across for his leather jacket, his face drawn as if with pain. I said, "Wait. You haven't to tell them till Sunday. Let's eat a meal and try to forget it for an hour or two."

I desperately wanted to comfort Leigh, to care for him, to please him. But I felt that whatever happened, our feeling for each other was stained, spoiled. Whoever gave way, you lost.

He worked Saturday morning. I shopped for the weekend, waiting in the butcher's, picking apples on a fruit stall, waiting at the traffic lights, shopping bag heavy on my arm. People thronging, pushing. And I could have cried in the street. Leave him? I needed him with an urgent emotional need. We were lovers, companions, friends, helpmates. My whole life was changed be-

cause I was sharing it. It's the vast difference between loneliness and non-loneliness. I couldn't do without him, needed him now perhaps more than he needed me.

Maybe I was making too much of it all. Let him tell these people no, and there'd be an end. In a couple of weeks it would all be forgotten.

When I got home, his mail was on the table by the door. I never touched his letters normally, but three of these were bills: a total of almost eighty-five pounds, all with "Please remit."

I went to his desk and wrote checks for all three. My balance was going down. I never saw the money he earned and never knew how much he paid for overhead. Also, he was paying to have his wife watched.

I'd never been short of money, wasn't now. But might be.

I put two pork chops on for lunch, peeled potatoes, cut up a turnip. Then I tried my hand at a jam tart.

When he came in I was looking through a book of his early sketches. He said, "Your firm'll be selling those at a hundred guineas apiece in the year two thousand." And laughed.

"Artists should always have children," I said. "Then at least somebody benefits."

"Well . . . you said it." Lunch was ready and we sat down to it. Joy to find his mood changed. He'd bought tickets for an ice-hockey match, and we spent the afternoon there. Later we went to a pub on the other side of the river.

On the way home I said, "What have you decided to tell them?"

"I can only tell them what you've decided. But can it. It's been a good evening. We don't want to spoil it now, do we?"

"Leigh—" I struggled with a curious emotion. "You've never actually told me what they want to know."

"You haven't given me a lot of encouragement—have you?"

"Well, what is it?"

"They'd like to know the security arrangements. What night watchmen, when they come on, what alarms, who's responsible. If it's too tough an assignment they'll scrub it."

If I *did* agree to help, it would warm our love again. And need

I get in too deep? With the best will in the world, there was a limit to what I could find out. With a little less than the best will . . . "Ask them what they want to know," I said.

But it's not easy to be half committed—this I would have realized on a less emotional evening.

YOU CAN be more than seven years with a firm and yet have hardly any idea about security precautions. You leave at six or seven in the evening and come in next morning at nine thirty. Meanwhile, doors are locked, men come on duty, but it's of no importance. So you have to start from scratch, and move cautiously. I hoped still that the whole idea would be scrubbed, but if it wasn't I wanted no finger of suspicion pointed.

Sometimes I woke in the night and thought, you fool, you female Judas, you twisted little beast; and the man beside me was asleep, a heavy young man, solid-limbed, gentle-handed, kind-mouthed; so I thought, well, there it is, you trade integrity for love; and what is integrity? Can you feel it, can you taste it, as you can feel and taste love? To whom did I fundamentally owe any loyalty except to Leigh? And I would turn over and hold his hand, as if that were the only certain thing in a world that didn't seem to have a lot of certainty anymore.

"THEY'RE NOT ordinary night watchmen," I said. "They're Safeguards. There are lots of such organizations; you pay them so much a year for overall protection. Safeguards send two men round every night. They come on at seven and stay till seven the next morning."

"Is it always the same two men?"

"No, they change every week."

"Are there burglar alarms as well?"

"Yes, two circuits. One operates on the windows and doors and works by buttons. All the buttons are pressed down and then the alarm is switched on. If anyone opens a window or door the button flips up and the circuit is broken and sets off the alarm."

"The other?"

"It works in the strong room, but I don't know how. It sets off bells on the roof if anyone opens the door."

"Where is the strong room?"

"In the basement. Not far from where I work. There's a safe inside, where jewelry is kept before it's sold."

He asked me what make the safe was, but I didn't know. He stared at his notes. "Well, it's a start. What routine do these Safeguards follow?"

"I think they patrol, and have machines they clock in at."

He nodded as if satisfied.

On Friday he was late back and said, "This man thinks it's a good start. But he wants more details." Hand on my arm. "Deborah, you've been a real sweetie, doing this. I hope you've not felt too bad about it."

"I'm beginning not to know how I feel. You're doing a sort of Pavlov's dog on me. In the end I shall be a nervous wreck."

"Don't say that." He scowled at me. "If this is doing anything serious to you, we'll turn it in."

What was serious? I could no longer judge. "Tell me what they want now."

He took out a creased sheet of paper. On it was written:

- (1) Name of safe and number. Number is always on middle bolt of the three that lock the safe when you turn the handle.
- (2) Position of alarm switches.
- (3) Type of strong-room alarm and how operated.
- (4) Private line between Whittington's and Safeguards?
- (5) Names of guards now doing duty.
- (6) Who they take over from at night, and who takes over from them in the morning?

Leigh was watching me. "It's a pretty tall order," he said.

"Leigh, you said this man was at our bonfire party. I can't guess who it is."

"Don't try, love. It's better not."

"Is Jack Foil in this?"

"The less you know, the better."



He looked very young. Perhaps I ought to have thought for us both, to have refused to do this thing. But although in character I was more mature, physically he was the master. If there's any excuse for me, that's it.

I suppose in seven years I'd been into the strong room thirty or forty times and often seen the safe opened. I'd gone in with someone, or got one of the directors to open the door because I wanted records from the files kept there. Now I needed an excuse to go to the safe itself, and it took me ten days to think of one. Then I had to get John Hallows to open the strong room and the safe, which made matters worse. I liked him so much.

He left me for about three minutes, and I copied the number of the safe on a corner of my catalogue. When he came in to lock up I said, "Is this room on a burglar alarm at night?"

"Yes." He smiled. "Why?"

"I heard one of the Safeguard men talking about it."

"There's a trembler alarm over there, between the cupboards. When it's set, opening the door alters the air pressure in the room and that sets the trembler off. If anyone tried to get in here they'd be in for a few nasty surprises."

"Good," I said, and so meant it.

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS, I wrote before Leigh got home.

- (1) Safe. Pemberton. Number 951063.
- (2) Alarm switches in director's room on ground floor, controlling both systems.
- (3) Strong room has a trembler alarm.
- (4) Cannot tell if there is a private line to Safeguards.
- (5) Present guards, Webster and Troon.
- (6) They take over from a director and one of our attendants. In the mornings, Mr. Sloane, foreman, and two cleaners arrive at seven, others at seven thirty.

I was helping more than I had intended to. When and how to stop? I had been tempted to give them the wrong numbers of the safe, but to tell them a lie which could be checked was asking for trouble, for Leigh as well as for me. So I was now cooperating

in a prospective burglary. It was a sleazy nightmare. I'd lost my sense of reality: was this really happening to me?

I crumpled the paper up, but before I could throw it away, Leigh came in and I gave it to him. This is the rationale of nightmare: take one step out of reality, and the rest logically follows.

## CHAPTER XI

THE INFORMATION was passed. Leigh hadn't received the money but had no doubt that he would get it. He was in his cheerful mood and carried me along. Weekends, we looked for a shop that we might rent.

He wrote a legally dictated letter to Lorne, asking her to come home. She didn't answer. The agency reported her as living a celibate life, but Leigh told them to keep a man on the case.

One day I came home and met a good-looking woman of early middle age leaving the studio. When I went in, Leigh appeared upset. "Dad's next-door neighbor. Says he's been ill."

"Why don't you go and see him?"

"I will sometime. But he's all right again."

"Let's both go and see him."

"No. Wait till we're married. He's conventional that way."

Weekly we skated. I could manage on my own now. Occasional theater, but little music—except for pop, we couldn't enjoy the same things. Douglas and Erica asked us up. It wasn't a success, though everybody tried. I took the opportunity of moving some of my precious porcelain to the studio.

Christmas came and went. This time last year I was a different person. Looking back, I saw that little trappings of invalidism had been there—and incipient old-maidism. Two or three at Whittington's remarked on a change. They didn't know the half.

On New Year's Eve I passed my driving test. I felt elated and Leigh was just as pleased. The rest of the day we spent alone. A quiet misty day, with the river buildings wrapped in cellophane. We listened to records until just before midnight, then went on

the balcony. As the clocks chimed, church bells began to ring. Then all the ships in the port of London let off their sirens and fired Very lights into the misty night. The air quivered with the wailing, hooting, snoring noise, echoing backwards and forwards across the river. Buildings blanched as Vercys fell, cranes flickered against the pink sky. Then as quickly as it began it stopped. The city sank back into shadow. But far away, in Blackwall Reach and Bugsby Reach and Gallions Reach, the sirens were still sounding like an echo dying, dying, dying . . .

IN THE new year Leigh left his job, took another as a clerk in a drafting office. A pound a week less, but more scope.

One day at lunch. "May I share your table, Miss Dainton?" It was Jack Foil. "A trifle crowded," he said, overlooking empty tables. "Just come out of Sotheby's. Fine stuff going, but over my head—or my pocket . . . ha ha. Waitress, a plate of underdone beef, and a salad. Miss Dainton, I've an envelope for Leigh."

I looked at the thick white envelope.

"Very helpful you've been, Miss Dainton." He buttered a piece of bread, covering the holes as if putting cracks. "You've an efficient mind, if you don't mind my saying so." His food came. He said, "Is there a private line?"

"What?" I was startled. "I haven't found out . . . I can't."

"We have to know. Talk to the guards."

"I'm usually gone before they come."

"Stay on. A joke or two—a pretty girl like you."

I watched him eating.

"There's usually little booby traps, things the intruder doesn't know about." He wiped the outside corners of his eyes. "Who's in charge of security? Who deals with Safeguards?"

"I don't know." I did know; it was Smith-Williams.

"Find out, will you?" His lettuce crackled and oil ran from the corner of his mouth. "It should be easy."

I said stiffly, "Does Leigh know you're meeting me?"

His eyes were glass. "I'm sure you'll help us. It's—part of the agreement, isn't it? I hope it's not asking too much."

It is, it is.

"There's little efficiency in the world," he said. "That's why I admire you. One of the elite. You and Leigh."

I said, "Are you the leader in this, Mr. Foil?"

"You must come and see us again." He smiled at me. "There aren't any leaders, Miss Dainton. It's among friends."

TWO HUNDRED pounds in ten-pound notes. I said, "You must pay off part of what you owe him."

"He'd be insulted," Leigh said. "This is a fair payment for what we've done, what *you've* done."

"But it's essential to get clear of them, don't you see?"

"I owe him five hundred. If you're going to kick clear, wait until you really can. That's common sense, love."

"This mustn't be squandered, Leigh."

"No, it should go in a long stocking, for the shop. And there's more to come. Perhaps much more."

"MR. SMITH-WILLIAMS," I said, "I was talking to my father about the burglary in Hatton Garden. What would happen if *we* got broken into? Would Safeguards be responsible?"

"Not unless we could prove negligence. Of course, it's a black mark against them if their precautions prove ineffective."

You angle for information but the fish doesn't bite. "I can't get what they want," I told Leigh.

"Do what you can, love. When's the next big jewel sale?"

"The end of February. Does that mean—"

"It doesn't mean a thing. Forget it. I love you."

Easy to forget then. Easier every day. Your nature, tastes changed. *His* ways were changing too. His voice was less aggressive, he used expressions I used, made fewer slips in grammar.

To dinner at the Caprice with Jack Foil. His wife in an expensive black taffeta frock, very short and deeply V'd at the back. From a distance, she would have passed for twenty-two.

After dinner, in the ladies' room: "Do call me Doreen; I feel we're going to be friends. Jack's very fond of Leigh."

"Has he known Leigh long?"

"It's about three years since he first brought him home. He did look sweet: half scared, half ready to fight. He's changed. Does Leigh talk to you much, Miss Dainton—Deborah? Jack doesn't talk to me. He's very sweet and you can *trust* him, but I sometimes think—oh, I mustn't say it! . . . Well, I think he likes me because I'm an ornament. He's a *collector* of beautiful things. Not that I think I'm beautiful, mind. Do you and Leigh talk?"

"Yes, quite a lot."

"Jack doesn't ever *tell* me things. But there's something brewing now, isn't there? Has Leigh told you?"

"We hardly ever discuss Jack." Our eyes met in the mirror.

"Are you afraid for Leigh? Whenever Jack's late I always think he's been run over or something."

"I'M TERRIBLY behindhand tonight," I said to Maurice Mills. "Can I work on a bit?"

"Yes, I'll let the guards know. But don't overdo it. A lot of this new stuff is practically undatable." He was right. In the last hundred and fifty years an enormous amount of china had been turned out anonymously by good factories, which could only be assembled in general categories. I could have left by seven easily.

Later, a tap at the door. "Excuse me, miss, I wondered whether you'd like a cup of tea? I've got it here."

"I'd love one, thank you."

Ginger-haired man of fifty. Square jaw. Blue uniform, like a policeman, heavy truncheon in belt. *Safeguards* shoulder flash.

"Sorry if I'm in your way," I said.

"No, it doesn't make no difference to us, like. Stay as long as you want. We don't often have comp'ny so late as this."

"What time is it? Good heavens, after ten!" Sipping tea. "Has your partner got one?"

"Oh, yes, he's upstairs; I took him his first."

"I suppose one of you always has to stay by the telephone?"

"Well, that's the general plan."

"D'you have a private line to your headquarters?"

"Yes. We ring up every half hour. Give a code word, see. Tonight's is . . . well, last night's was *Lowestoft*. If they don't get it every quarter and three-quarter hour they know there's trouble and come round."

"Suppose you're a bit late?"

"Oh, well, they give us five minutes' grace."

He looked like a retired army sergeant. Tough and not easily frightened. Jack Foil had better try easier meat.

Suddenly he said, "I'd best be going. It's quarter past, and I have to clock in at ten twenty on the second floor."

"Clock in?"

"We've three clocks in the place, miss. We do 'em each by the hour, one every twenty minutes. Did the one down here at ten. If we let 'em overrun they set off the alarms."

"Isn't that clever!"

"It's a good system. Let us know when you're going. We wouldn't want you to try and unbolt the doors by mistake!"

I SAID, "They'll never break it, not in this world!"

"You sound pleased."

"I am. Oh, I am. Relieved anyway. Now your friends can try somewhere else, where I *can't* help them!"

He was silent a minute. "But there may be a way round all this, see. We'll have to consider it."

"We'll have to? It's their plan, not yours!"

"Oh, I know. But they're friends, Jack and Ted, and the others. After a time, talking of it, you get drawn in. It's like a game—"

"Nasty game if it goes wrong. Just how involved d'you mean?"

He looked at me moodily. "I wasn't going to tell you, but as the whole thing may be off—they offered me a part in it."

Careful, no drama. "D'you mean in the breaking in?"

"Yes . . ."

"And what did you say?"

"I said yes." He took my hands. I tried to draw them away, but no good. "*You* always reason things out, Deborah. What about *me* for a change? When they first said how about it, I thought, this is

crazy. But then I thought, I've been spouting about what I'd do if I had the chance. Well, here is the chance. If you don't back it with your guts, you'll *know* you're an all-time sham!"

I got my hands back. "Leigh, you're *wrong*. It won't work. It may for a time, but it's like gambling, you can't win."

JACK FOIL said, "You'll get the three hundred tomorrow, Miss Dainton. Or Leigh will if you want him to have it."

Ted said, "You got a telephone check every quarter and three-quarter hour; and a clock check at the hour, at twenty past and at twenty to. There's never more'n a few minutes without a check. An' the alarm goes off if they're *not* done!"

"So do we give it up?" Leigh asked. "Do we drop it?"

Jack and Ted casually calling at our studio. We drink coffee, gossip. Perhaps it's just what it seems. Then it begins.

"We'll just have to think about it," Jack said. "Never despair. When things are worked to a pattern like this, people get over-confident. They think nobody can beat it, they relax. You can beat nearly everything with time and patience."

"You mean we don't drop it?" Leigh said.

Jack wiped his eyes. "It's an allergy," he said. "It must be fine to have lovely young eyes like you, Miss Dainton."

Ted fumbled in his pocket. "I got a list of the Safeguards staff. A hundred and forty-two of 'em. I've been through 'em with the police records Roland's got. Four of 'em have been in prison. You could get at two of 'em—Baker Evans and Fullerton—not for what they've served time for but for what they haven't. Anyway, money'll buy 'em." He turned over the list. "Baker Evans takes over duty at Whittington's sometime next month. It might just fit. Or he might be able to switch it to fit."

Sip at my coffee. Hands and feet are cold. Accessory before the fact. I can go to prison. But they're only *talking*. It won't happen. That woman I met in hospital, paralyzed from the neck down—she said: "There's always hope, and I find pleasure in little things. I never look further than tomorrow."

Tomorrow is Saturday, and it won't happen.

THE WEEKEND SUNNY AND MILD, an oasis in the winter. Also an oasis in our private life. We drove to the coast—I drove most of the way—and parked on Beachy Head. We ate sandwiches and talked and laughed, forgetting the thing. Then we got out of the car and looked over the white cliff to a sea pale as porcelain.

Leigh said, "Let's not go back tonight. Let's stay at some hotel. We'll pretend you're an heiress I've run off with."

I laughed. "We've no night-things. Not a toothbrush."

"We can buy toothbrushes. Let's stay at a little pub with oak beams and open fires and a big double bed. I want to wake up and hear church bells ringing. Maybe I'll go to church."

We found a village pub six or seven miles inland. One bedroom free, a sort of attic with tiny windows and beams dangerously low, a floor that creaked and sloped and a water closet that gurgled. But it had the double bed. Leigh said we were having trouble with our car and paid for the room in advance, signing the register "Mr. and Mrs. James Smith." And in the morning we sipped tea and listened to the sparrows chirping in the sun.

Leigh seldom spoke of his past life, but now he said, "This room reminds me of the one I had when I was a kid, in the house overlooking Clapham Common."

"I thought you lived in Swindon."

"So we did—later. Good job we moved. I got in with a crowd. That's when the old J.D. began."

"What's that?"

"Juvenile delinquency. Not that it amounted to much. A couple of coppers round at the house puts the fear of God into you. No more breaking windows or pinching sweets. I stayed straight, s'welp me, until I met you."

"I don't think that's fair."

"No, it isn't. Forget I spoke."

We did go to church, Leigh in rather hi-fi clothes. I was more at sea in the service than he was. Douglas and Erica had done nothing to educate their children in what they considered an obsolete superstition. When we came out the air was colder, the brief spring nearly spent.



We drove home reluctantly. A thin haze of fog hung over London. The studio smelled dank and I drew the curtains, shivering. He asked if I'd caught a chill. But it wasn't that sort of chill. The bright day is done and we are for the dark.

CHAPTER XII

THE JEWELRY sale on Thursday the twenty-third of February would be our most important one of the year. The Plouth diamonds were to be sold, and the Maharajah of Gwalpur had sent a collection of emeralds of exceptional quality. We were also offering ninety-six lots of less important jewelry. The sale would start at ten a.m., and John Hallows would conduct it. During the preceding weeks much of the jewelry would accumulate in our safe. The Gwalpur emeralds would arrive three days before, and would be on view during the day. We had four such jewelry sales a year, and the normal precautions, as even Jack Foil admitted, were adequate.

Leigh told me nothing until Saturday evening, the eleventh, when, in a smoky pub, I asked him for news. He had three faces: the young, open, boyish one, which I loved; the petulant, explosive, tormented one, when he talked of his painting; and the cautious, eye-on-the-door, whisper-behind-your-hand one that settled on him now. He said, "We're going to have a shot on the night of the twenty-second. Baker Evans has come in with us. He comes on duty next Friday, luckily."

"How are you going to do it?"

"You'd best not know."

"I think I've a right to. I want to know."

"Well . . . we go in at two thirty that Thursday morning. Evans switches off the alarm circuits in the director's office and opens the back door. We cosh him on the head and tie him up. First thing the other man knows—a bloke called McCarthy—we're in his room and it's four to one. We tie him up, break the strong room and blow the safe."

"What about the telephoning?"

"Evans will know the code word. The man at the other end won't know it's one of us speaking."

"How can you get into the strong room?"

"No difficulty. Ted Sandymount got down there the other day, pretending to lose his way."

"Did you say there were four of you?"

"Yes, the other's the expert on safes."

"Is he the leader you spoke about?"

Leigh shifted uneasily. "Leave it, Deb . . . Want another drink?"

"No, thanks. Let's go home."

Later, when we were eating, he said, "I've found a shop for sale in Lambeth, a tobacconist's. The man died and his widow's selling the lease. We could turn it into a showroom and live above it. The license for tobacco would keep us going while we're collecting stock."

"What do they want for it?"

"Seven thousand, for the goodwill of the business. It's worth that as site value. The rental is five hundred a year."

"We couldn't pay a year's rent, let alone buy the goodwill."

"We might be able to in a couple of weeks."

I said, "Just what do you hope to make out of this thing?"

"The stuff must be worth a hundred and fifty thousand pounds at least. If we get a third of its value and split it four ways, that means twelve thousand pounds. It would set us up."

"Until the next time."

"There's going to be no repeat performance! D'you think I'm looking forward to this caper? I'm absolutely petrified. Let me get away with enough to set up in business with you, and you've got a law-abiding citizen on your hands!"

We went to see the shop the following Saturday. It was in a district where a lot of old buildings had been pulled down and offices built. I thought it would cost two or three thousand to renovate it, but Leigh said he could do half of it himself. Once the deal was done, he'd leave his job and work full time here. He said I could continue at Whittington's until he was ready for me,

but I did not know whether I could. With Wednesday night so close, it became more impossible to go there each day.

I couldn't sleep that night for thinking of the shop. The widow had given us a week to decide. Even if only five thousand came to us we could probably borrow enough to make do. Even with three thousand. So one is corrupted.

SUNDAY PASSED uneasily. Leigh spent the day sketching. I'd noticed before that tension sent him to his sketchbook. He could *really* sketch well. Seeing his pencil moving with such certainty on the paper, one wondered why he should be considered to have no talent. Remembering the Picasso film, how the master created powerful, significant designs with a piece of chalk, one could only see the resemblances, not the differences. There was of course the gap created by genius . . . Could it be that Leigh had a future, as an artist in black and white?

In the evening I went to see Douglas and Erica. They were just the same. Nothing, it seemed, had happened in their lives, while so much was happening in mine. Perhaps it's a commonplace of youth visiting middle age to find this. They were married, occupied, on an even keel, and I envied them their serenity. Yet I would not have changed. Or only for a week. Let this week go by. Please God, if there is a God, let this week go by.

When I told them about the shop, they were cool, doubtful of success. They were like rich, snobbish parents disapproving of a daughter marrying a workingman, except that it was not Leigh's lack of class or money to which they objected. It was what they considered his lack of talent.

I said, "What would you say if I asked to borrow money for the shop?"

Douglas stroked his head. "It's never been our habit to *accumulate*. Not that there's been much chance with three girls to educate." He laughed. "How did you *hope* to finance it?"

"I thought you might be able to borrow a few thousand. You're successful, established, never in debt." I pressed this point as if to ward off the dangers of Wednesday night, so I could cry:

"Leigh, I have the money, don't take any part in this raid; I can save us both!"

But Douglas and Erica were unhelpful. I traveled home exasperated, railing against parents who couldn't understand because they hadn't been told what was at stake.

MONDAY. A day of petty irritations: staff shortages because of flu, clients disputing valuations, fog. It took me nearly an hour to get home, and Leigh hadn't returned. The big room was like a dank well. I switched on all the heaters and crouched shivering over the fire, warming my hands and listening to distant fog signals. When I had thawed out I began to prepare supper. I put two lamb cutlets under the grill. He hadn't come by the time they were ready, so I settled to wait.

Two letters for him, one in a woman's writing. Not Lorne's; I'd seen hers on a grocery list. The other from the solicitor. I drew back the curtain. The fog was unrelenting, like an attack of melancholia. I thought of Doreen Foil's remark: "Whenever Jack's late I always think he's been run over or something."

Back to look at the cutlets. They weren't improving. Have mine now? But I wasn't hungry. The fog had got into my throat. *Fear death?—to feel the fog in my throat, the mist in my face . . .* Who'd written that? Browning, I thought. *I was ever a fighter, so one fight more, the best and the last . . .* nineteenth-century optimism. Almost meaningless now. But what in its place? The world was sick, poisoning itself. Time for a return to former values? *Thou shalt not?* But could you turn back? It was against nature. So forward, into the darkness and the fog.

At nine I took the burned cutlets and picked at one. At nine thirty, footsteps. Leigh, in his old leather coat; Ted Sandymount; Jack Foil; a stranger, middle-aged, gaunt. There was something wrong. Half smiling, half grim, they found chairs.

Leigh said, "What'll everybody drink? Sit down, Deborah; you're in this now."

John Irons, they said his name was, a top man on safes. A broad face the color of putty, black deep-set eyes, a mouth that looked

as if it only dropped words out of the corner. Good-mannered, quiet, watchful.

Three of them had whisky, and I made coffee for Leigh and me. We sat and talked. Then Jack Foil cleared his throat.

He said: "You've helped us in this, Miss Dainton—Deborah—so it's only fair you should know what's happened."

I stared at him. "What is it?"

"There's been a real upset." His eyes wobbled at me. "No fault of anybody's. Baker Evans was due to take over at Whittington's last Friday from a man called Gaskell. Perfect. But there's flu about; his partner went down with it, so they told him to stay on the weekend at Knight's, the jewelers. Coming on at Whittington's tomorrow night. A bit close, but he'd be there all right for Wednesday night. Fine." Jack Foil twisted his signet ring. "But now his mate's down with pneumonia. Evans stays at Knight's and Gaskell at Whittington's with a fellow called McCarthy."

Dead silence in the studio. "So it's off," I said.

Jack Foil shrugged.

"Or it's postponed," I said. "There'll be other sales."

"What others?"

Silence. There was a constricting band round my lungs.

"Would you do it?" asked Jack Foil.

"DON'T UPSET yourself, Miss Dainton," said Jack Foil. "Calm down and have a little drink. Leigh, pour her out a finger or so, a dash of soda—*that's* right. The elite sort of way you were brought up—I see how you feel. It's sprung on you suddenly, but it was sprung on us suddenly. We felt desperate and thought, well, Deborah's been so much help. Maybe . . ."

"Well, I'm sorry."

"We won't press you; we'll leave you to think it over. But just let me say what would happen, so that you can judge better. . . . Wednesday evening, people leaving, you get ready to leave, hat and coat, gloves on. Right! You leave, they think. But instead you slip into one of those closets. *You* know the building, it's *made* for hide-and-seek. Lovely big closets, I've seen them. It'll be a

long wait. But no risk, really. And at two twenty you come out when the guard's gone upstairs to clock in on the second floor; then you slip up to the ground floor, avoiding the telephone room where the other guard is, slip into the boss's office and switch off the two alarm switches. Right? Then you walk down the corridor to the back door, knowing the patrolling guard's upstairs, and let yourself out. You don't lock the door. You go home. That's all. It isn't too hard, is it? I'll leave you to think about it."

"Please don't."

Mr. Irons spoke. "How do we get the code word? I couldn't promise to do the job in less than a couple of hours."

"Ted can tap the wire about midnight," Jack Foil said. "No difficulty, if Miss Dainton could do her part."

"Look, Jack—" said Leigh.

"Oh, I know. We'll say nothing more now. But I do ask her to think about it. I know it's a bit alarming at first—"

"Oh, it's asking a lot," said Ted. "You got to have nerve."

"Miss Dainton's got nerve. Don't tell me different."

"Oh, stop it, Jack," said Leigh.

"Look, Leigh," said Jack, "I'm not bullying anybody. If this thing falls through because Miss Dainton won't help, that's just very, very unfortunate. We're all a lot poorer, and very *disappointed*. But don't tell me she wouldn't have the nerve. I'd rather choose her than any of you men if I was in a tight corner!"

Leigh said, "You shouldn't have asked her!"

"It's up to her," said Jack. "She doesn't need your protection. Come along, boys, we've said all we can."

LEIGH SAID, "Let's go to sleep, love. There isn't anything more to be said."

"But you really want me to do it?"

"I still think they'd no right to ask. It gives me the works to think of you in any *danger*. But then I think of all our plans coming to nothing. I think of that shop and putting a deposit down and buying a bit of stock to start in business together. And that makes the difference . . . Oh, I don't know what to say."

"You've said it."

"Yes, we've talked it out. Can you go to sleep?"

"No."

Leigh said, "Irons is a queer bird, the absolute pro. Other people do the breaking in. Then he walks in and does his job. Like a surgeon, almost. Of course he's been inside two or three times. It's a pity to have anyone the police know, but you can't do without an expert."

"I would call Jack an expert."

"Well, in his own line, yes. He organizes."

After a minute I said, "I think his wife's scared of him."

"Doreen? Of Jack? Whatever makes you say that?"

"Aren't you, Leigh?"

"What, scared of Jack? Why should I be? He's the leader because he's got the know-how, the connections. . . ."

"So he is the leader. There was no one else at our party?"

"No . . . But in the early stages Jack wanted to be anonymous, as a precaution."

"You're different with him. He takes sureness from you."

"Well, he's given me a lot in return. He was the first person, ever, to treat me seriously as a painter."

"Put out the light," I said to Leigh.

TUESDAY was even more foggy than Monday. London Airport was closed, trains were canceled, ships dockbound. Statistics were released of deaths from bronchitis and pneumonia.

At Whittington's it was the second viewing day for the jewelry. Emeralds cosseted in cream silk stared up from their glass cases. The splendid diamonds shone with white fire. Parker, Davidson, Jones and Armitage were the attendants on duty. To experts who came with inquiries the cases could be opened, the jewels examined, under the gaze of two of our men. At the door Anson and Harper, both ex-paratroopers, were ready to block any hurried exit. It had never happened, but it always could.

Downstairs, my assistant, Mary Fent, and I were going through a big collection of china. As we looked at each piece, Mary wrote

down what I told her and we stacked it in the closet beside the bookcases. There was a much bigger closet by the door, an untidy mess of old catalogues and art magazines, where we hung our coats and where my discarded stick was propped. There were also two big closets in the passage outside, crammed with unsold articles awaiting collection by owners. At the end of this passage was Smith-Williams's office, and opposite that another closet. Here the passage made a T, the left-hand turn leading to the furniture department and stairs, the right-hand one leading to the strong room, the antiquities department and two storage rooms.

I left at six and was surprised to find Leigh outside. We groped our way across Bond Street to Cork Street. I expected his little car, but we stopped at a big old Austin waiting at a parking meter. Inside was Jack Foil. We got in the back.

"Miss Dainton, this is easier than meeting at a house. I wanted to thank you. I think it will be easy for you. You've—er—picked where you can wait?"

"Yes . . ." I said, and Leigh took my hand.

Jack Foil said, "We agree to your condition that it should be one twenty and not two twenty. I quite appreciate the waiting will be difficult. Your watch has a luminous face?"

"Yes."

"Then all is quite simple, no cause for nerves." He paused. A man with a pear-shaped hat walked past; in the fog you couldn't be absolutely sure it wasn't a policeman.

The heavy, almost educated voice went on: "The Safeguard at the telephone rings his headquarters at a quarter to one, a quarter past one, a quarter to two. The Safeguard on patrol clocks in in the basement at one o'clock, on the second floor at twenty past one, on the ground floor at twenty to two. You will leave your hiding place at twenty past one, go upstairs to Mr. Greeley's office and switch off the alarms. The patrolling Safeguard will be on the second floor, having just clocked in. You will unlock the back door, and we shall be waiting. As we come in you will go out."

"How shall I get home?"

"Drive yourself. A young lady who is easy to remember



shouldn't be seen catching a late bus or a taxi. Leigh will hire a Mini tomorrow and will park it on the south side of Berkeley Square, where you will pick it up. Leigh's car will be parked in Farthing Street. You change cars and drive home."

I said, "What about the Safeguards? You'll have to—"

"Oh, they won't be hurt. There's four to one, they'll show common sense. . . . One thing, Miss Dainton, if anything goes wrong at the beginning, don't try to carry on. If a Safeguard should see you, say you twisted your leg and fainted. Or if they find you in the closet, say you went in to fetch something and felt faint and someone must have shut the door . . . I leave the story to you. Get them to send for a doctor. I've given Leigh a pill for you, a simple emetic—it's more convincing if you really are sick."

"What time do we meet tomorrow night?" Leigh asked.

"Midnight. We pick up Irons at twelve forty-five, park here at one ten. One last thing, Miss Dainton. This is a big effort for you. I never forget an injury and I never forget a favor. I'll see you and Leigh do well out of this. Very well indeed."

I was moving to get out when Leigh nudged my attention to Jack's outstretched hand. I took it; it was cool and very soft.

"Good luck for tomorrow," he said.

When Leigh and I got to bed that night, we realized we were unlikely to sleep. We tried aspirin, we made tea. I dozed on his shoulder. Nightmare and reality took turn and turn about.

Much later I woke, warm and comfortable, the dark just giving way to the filtered light of dawn. For a moment I stretched with a sense of lassitude and ease. Then the drawn sword of the new day slid its cold steel between my ribs.

### CHAPTER XIII

THE FOG was clearing. By midday, sunshine had broken through. I had a substantial lunch, as I should get no supper, but the food lay in my stomach like clay. About three o'clock I felt so sick that I began to wonder if I should be ill and wreck the plan. We were

still working on the same china, and there were some pieces of eighteenth-century stuff that were almost certainly Lowestoft, in spite of the Meissen crossed swords on them—factories were not above copying trademarks. Maurice Mills was out, so I put the pieces aside for him.

Then I went out and swallowed three cups of weak tea, to see if it would kill or cure. When I got back I found old Mrs. Stevenson waiting. She had brought two more pieces of china. I warned her she would be lucky to clear thirty pounds for these.

What would she think if she knew? What would John Hallows think? He'd probably pity rather than blame. Poor Deborah—so infatuated that she can no longer think straight. But after seven years . . . He would be truly hurt, as would most of the directors. It was *such* a betrayal.

I went through the showrooms. A satisfying number of people about; it would be a successful sale tomorrow—if it took place. Nerve pains gripping in my stomach. I went to the ladies' room and sat in front of the mirror and made up my face. Back to work, fighting bouts of pain. Mary Fent had been called away so I took the opportunity of going to the closet opposite Smith-Williams's office. Two mirrors, a folding camp bed, a quarter-size copy of Rodin's *The Kiss*, two buckets, a mop. Room for me. I had just shut the door when Smith-Williams came out of his office.

"Oh, Deborah, can you come here a minute?"

Like a criminal already caught, I went shakily into his office and answered a routine inquiry. He had to ask me one question twice, and I thought he looked at me oddly.

Half past five. The showrooms would now be closed. John Hallows and Davidson, a big gray-haired ex-Guardsman, would go upstairs with strongboxes and put the jewels in—the vivid viridian emeralds from Gwalpur, the diamonds collected by the late Jonathan Plouth, paper millionaire. They would bring the boxes down to the strong room, put them in the safe, lock the safe and the strong room. All would be secure for the night.

Mary asked if she could leave. I said yes, I was leaving myself in a few minutes.

"Where's Mr. Mills this afternoon?" she asked.

"I don't know," I said, wondering whether he would be back. She slid off her stool, tall and graceless and young. "Thanks, Deborah. 'Bye."

If Maurice Mills came back he might work late and it would be difficult to find an excuse to outstay him. But the earlier I went to hide the more likely I was to be seen. And someone might open that closet. . . . I worked on.

At seven the guards would arrive and switch on the alarms. They *had* to know if anyone was in the building, because they had to switch off the alarms to let them out, so if I was publicly in the building at seven, I was marked until I left.

In haste I got up, shut a reference book, dropped my pen, groped under the desk, couldn't find it. Starting up, I jogged the desk and shook a cup and saucer to the edge. Rubbing my shoulder, I looked out through the glass door and saw Smith-Williams outside his office talking to Davidson. Put the cup and saucer in the closet. Look at my watch. Twenty to seven. Don't panic. Smith-Williams was lighting a cigarette.

If I put on my coat and went past, turned left towards the stairs but skirted them . . . there was an alcove with enormous oil paintings leaning half across it. The lights in the passage wouldn't be dimmed until seven, but this alcove was shadowy.

Davidson was explaining something. I moved a few plates to places of safety, picked up my bag and gloves. I fiddled in a pocket of the bag, found Jack Foil's pill, put it back. I went to the closet, struggled into my coat, tied a Spanish scarf round my hair. In the mirror my face looked pinched, the eyes out of proportion—like a bush baby. Pains in my stomach. I switched off the lights and walked towards the two men.

"Good night," I said.

They answered good night as I walked past my closet. Turn left toward the stairs and, on impulse, into the ladies' room. No one there. Wait five minutes. At twelve minutes to seven I came back out. Passage empty. No one on stairs. Three steps back. Davidson had gone, but Smith-Williams's door was open. To walk

into the closet, with that door open was more than I could do.

Back past the stairs. Voices at the top. Davidson and another man. At the end of the passage was the furniture department, still lit up. Abreast of the alcove. I bent down to tie my shoe. No sound. I slid behind the paintings.

MEMORIES of childhood. Hide-and-seek with Sarah and Arabella. The breathless, heart-thumping pain of crouching in a dark place while others searched for you! The giggling, half-hysterical leap when you were discovered. Confined spaces meant nothing to me in those days.

At seven the lights went down. Pilot lights in the passages and single lights in the storerooms and display rooms. Minor offices, such as my own, would be dark. The first part of the plan had happened. I could get to my closet if I chose the time.

Seven twenty. Maurice Mills was clearly not coming back. What about Smith-Williams? The attendants would all be gone. Think carefully. At seven the patrolling guard will have clocked in near the strong room in this basement. At twenty past he goes up two flights and registers in the cashier's office. Therefore this basement should be empty of life until at least a quarter\*to eight. Wait until twenty-five to eight—that gives everything time to settle down. Fifteen minutes to crawl by. Don't look at your watch until you've counted a thousand. I reached five hundred, and feel I must look. Six minutes have passed. I look at my watch until seven thirty. Now.

Out into the passage. The stairs are dark. Turn corner, Smith-Williams's office in darkness. Hand on handle of closet. Freeze . . . our office is lighted. Against the wall, trying to be invisible. Through the glass door I see Smith-Williams coming out, then he turns back into the office and lights a cigarette.

Hand on closet door, open. It *creaked*. He's poring over one of our reference books. Gently into the closet. One foot, the other, draw in one's body, pulling the door with fingertips. Creak. Through the narrowing gap I see him return the book to its shelf. Turn handle slowly; shut, release handle gently. Darkness.

Success. Footsteps outside, another door shut. He has gone back to his own office.

He left at eight. First I heard him talking to Gaskell, the Safeguard. I knew, from Monday night, the West Country voice. After Smith-Williams left, silence fell.

I was at last able to find a comfortable position. I inched the buckets over to one side, eased the copy of the Rodin sculpture after them. It was impossible to unfold the camp bed, so I squatted on it, my legs reaching towards the Rodin, my back against the wall. The acute pains in my inside stopped. I pulled off my scarf. Immediate emergency over. Don't think of claustrophobia. You're not confined, just have to turn the door handle. Only you daren't touch the handle, that's all.

So dark. It was like near blindness. Strange that crack let in no light from the pilot light in the passage. Perhaps the light had failed. Odd if there was a power failure . . .

Where was Leigh? Not yet nine o'clock. Perhaps eating a nervous meal at the studio. What excuse would Jack Foil make to Doreen when he left the house later tonight? Or did she know? And the putty-faced, sunken-eyed Mr. Irons. Was he gathering up his tools? How would he bring them here, in a suitcase?

Wish I had brought a torch. Open the door an inch? It would be safe to do so at times through the night, when no one else would be on this floor. But safer not. Left knee aching.

Funny, if I'd never had this bad knee, if none of that had happened. I had come home from school one afternoon; Erica had said petulantly, "Oh, Deborah, not *another* cold!" Next morning: "Did you remember the aspirin? Well, go to school, take two or three hankies." That evening: "Do your homework and then bed; I'll bring you some hot milk." Temperature 99.4°. Not alarming. Streaming nose. Douglas, in the morning, peeping in smiling. "What's the temp? Ninety-nine? Bed for you, but get up for lunch, it'll do you good. Minta will be in to see you later. Bye." I didn't get up and didn't want lunch. Dreary afternoon, nose running, throat dry. Out of bed to the lavatory, felt breathless. Erica back at eight. "*Still* in bed? You're looking pinched."

While they were having supper it got worse. "Mummy, I can't breathe! Mummy, I can't breathe!" Douglas upstairs. One look. "Telephone for an ambulance."

Didn't do to dwell on it now. How much air in this closet? Footsteps. Gaskell again. It must be ten. Three hours gone. Nearly halfway. I glanced at my watch and was horrified to see that it had stopped at ten past nine. Now what to do? I put it to my ear and heard it ticking.

Jogging in the ambulance. Douglas and Erica came with me. Somebody in the darkness had said, "Hurry, she'll not live another hour." Hospital room with a boxlike thing. Only my head out. Torture? No, iron lung. Flat on back, head on pillow, body inside enormous metal coffin connected by tube to giant bellows slowly rising and falling. *Pushing* on your chest till you wanted to faint, then relaxing. *Pulling* till your mouth opened and air went in; relaxing. *Pressing* till the air came out. Then Douglas saying: "Naturally one did not anticipate, the symptoms were unidentifiable." Another voice: "You didn't notice the loss of muscle tone?"

I gently pushed the closet door an inch. Light. Dim, but so welcome. And *air*. I put out my head. The offices in darkness. Upstairs two men. Shut the door carefully, but it creaked. Grope your way back—something fell with a hellish clatter.

Frozen silence, heart lurching. An overall had dropped off the back of the door. But what had made the noise? If Gaskell or McCarthy were coming down the stairs . . . I waited. Nothing. Five to ten.

Stuffy. I could feel the iron lung compressing and expanding my chest. You didn't lose feeling in your body with polio. You lay as if strapped in that iron coffin, not moving because you couldn't. They fed you liquids through a sort of teapot. They were cheerful, you wanted to scream and daren't. A bubble might form in your throat and make you cough and then you'd suffocate.

Three hours to go . . . They took me out after a day, but I began to die so they put me back. The nights were the worst. Your nose irritated and you couldn't rub it. A tear ran down your cheek and tickled. And the bellows went on. It *was* torture because you

were really dead and it was artificially keeping you alive. If you could just *suffocate*: a horrible few minutes and it would be *over*. But this: *in* and *out* and *in* and *out* and *in* and *out* . . . If mucus ran down your face and you whimpered loud enough the nurse would wake and bend over you and wipe your face. "All right, love? Like a drink?"

My head banged against the wall and I woke up. . . . Time? Nearly midnight. Gosh, I might have slept all night! But was it sleep? Wasn't it half fainting for lack of air? I could feel the machine working on my chest even now. Paralyzed, dead and buried, all except my head. Black walls pressing, holding me down.

I wriggled the handle of the door, got it open and stumbled out into the passage, gasping. I could hardly stand, hair soaked in sweat, trembling, gasping. *Never* go back, not for love of Leigh or for all the money in England!

Reality taking over. I shut the closet and leaned against it. A short break, then perhaps I could stand it again, only an hour and a half. Pity to fail now. The door of Smith-Williams's office was ajar. I pushed it open, closed it partway again, groped to his swivel chair and sat down.

Relief. Like being taken out of the box for the third time and finding that your lungs could go in and out of their own accord. Erica cried. Douglas's blue eyes limpid with pleasure. "She's been very lucky," they said. "Full movement in the arms, and we'll hope the legs will recover in a day or so."

Footsteps on the stairs. I was caught, McCarthy. He'd been a prison officer and a private detective. Well, it wouldn't be difficult to pretend illness. No need for Jack Foil's pill.

McCarthy appeared at the junction of the passages, swinging his torch. He looked past me towards my office, then went on towards the clocking-in place, whistling the "Londonderry Air." His footsteps stopped. He had gone into the antiquities department. Footsteps coming back, his torch flickering about. He paused, the light swept across Smith-Williams's office in passing, but too high to show me.

He went on, into the furniture department, then back to mount the stairs.

I wiped my damp forehead. I should be safe here for nearly an hour, sitting in comparative comfort. When one o'clock came, I would slide down and lie under the desk until he had gone.

And so it was. When McCarthy had been by again I sat in the chair, and began to watch the minute hand of my luminous watch. Twenty minutes to go. Perhaps for me the worst was over.

#### CHAPTER XIV

TWENTY MINUTES past one. One Safeguard should now be on the second floor, the other in the telephone room on the ground floor. The pilot light burned at the foot of the stairs. I went up. Show-rooms haunted in the half-light. A great Persian vase loomed like a man standing in the doorway. The offices were to the left; a light under the telephone-room door; Mr. Greeley's office in darkness. Halfway there I remembered gloves. "Don't forget gloves," Jack Foil had said. "You might leave fingerprints." Too late to go back to the closet. A handkerchief; wrap it round the handle of Mr. Greeley's door, go in.

A small square office; light from the passage. Between two bookcases was a small cupboard where he kept drinks; behind the bottles were the switches, two square brown bakelite boxes marked ON and OFF in white letters. Move the bottles carefully; clumsy work with a handkerchief, but I got them out and reached in again. Both switches down. I pushed one up and then the other; each made a noisy clack. I knocked over a glass. It rolled along the edge of the shelf and I caught it with my other hand. Gulp, swallow fear. Fingerprint. Put glass in pocket.

In three or four minutes McCarthy or Gaskell would be coming down. I went out. No movement from the telephone room. Perhaps the man was dozing. Nearly half an hour before he made his next call to headquarters. Now back past the head of the stairs, through the book auction room, then the counter where things



were received, the narrow hall, the door leading to Bruton Yard.

It was of stout oak and locked with a five-lever mortise dead-lock. Heavy bolts top and bottom. Bottom one came easily but the top I could barely reach. Back to counter for chair. Another fingerprint? No matter: I was often called to the counter. The top bolt came down. I pulled the chair quietly back, turned the mortise lock, flicked up the catch, opened the door.

A man came in, horrible, like a nightmare: I hadn't expected the stocking masks. Another, who squeezed my arm. "Bless you, love." A third. A fourth.

Then I was out in the foggy night. Bruton Yard is used as a rear entrance by a dozen firms whose premises back onto it. There are two sodium streetlamps, but our end is in shadow.

A couple of windows lit in the next building, a textile firm. Several cars parked about the yard; the old Austin sedan was one of them. I shivered, wondering what was going on behind the door at my back. The guards *might* not resist. Still, robbery with violence . . . they'd be tied and gagged. A much heavier sentence if things went wrong. And I, accessory before and after the fact.

Ought to go. Mini parked on south side of Berkeley Square. It meant walking through brightly lit, half-empty streets. No policeman would fail to notice my limp. Of course, one thirty not late for London. Chances were I'd never even see a policeman. But I did not move, needing time after the terrible tensions. Safe in the shadows. A tabby cat came towards me mewling. She was from one of the other offices, sometimes walked into Whittington's and was given a saucer of milk. Hand down, and she rubbed against it. A touch of warmth and homeliness and sanity. I walked to Bruton Street, then stopped to put on my scarf to disguise my fairly noticeable hair. Fumbling in pockets, I realized the scarf was in the closet along with my gloves. Danger, if the police found them before I did? Easily identifiable, particularly the Spanish scarf. What time did you leave? Who saw you leave?

Two or three young men were coming down Bruton Street. One of them gave a wolf whistle. I turned back into the yard, retreated to the oak door. Had they locked it on the other side? I took out

my handkerchief and tried the handle. It turned and I went back in.

The pilot light burning dimly in the passage. Silence. I went to the counter and on into the book auction room—footsteps. A man. He looked at me like an animal ready to kill; hand raised. The hand dropped. "What th' hell?" Voice I didn't know.

"I've forgotten my gloves."

Behind him, Leigh's figure. "Deborah! What a thing to do! How did you get in? Len, you were supposed to lock the door—"

"I thought I 'ad . . . I'll do it now."

"Where are your gloves?" Leigh said to me.

"But the guards. Are they—have you . . ."

"Yes. The little one gave in without us laying a finger on him. Len had to tap the other, but he's all right. Go and get your gloves, for Pete's sake."

"Can I stay?" I said. "I'm afraid of going to the car."

"Hell, I don't know. It breaks the arrangements. . . . Door O.K., Len?"

"O.K.," said the stranger, coming back.

"She wants to stay."

Len shrugged. "It's not my show."

Leigh said to me, "Get your gloves. We'll ask Ted."

I said: "Where's Jack Foil?"

"At home. Where d'you expect him to be?"

We moved together towards the stairs. The telephone room was still lighted. Len went in.

"Who is Len?"

"He guards the guards. They're in there. Where did you leave your damned gloves?"

"In the closet downstairs."

We went together, his gloved hand gripping my upper arm tightly. I opened the closet and he flashed his torch. I picked up the gloves and pulled them on, tied the scarf over my head.

Footsteps on the stairs. "Len says you want to stay, Deb." Ted Sandymount.

"Yes. There's much more risk in that five-minute walk."

"Well, I don't know what Jack'll say." He hurried on towards the strong room. Leigh went too, and after a minute I followed. This, in a sense, was a release after the last six hours.

Ted was on his stomach in the passage, doing something to the power plug in the wall. John Irons had pulled off his stocking and loosened his collar; hands on hips, he was staring at the strong-room door and whistling gently. He alone of the four men looked unhurried. When he saw us he muttered, "It's a bit harder than Ted said. This door will take a lot of blowing."

Ted Sandymount said, "D'you want two outlets or one?"

"One'll do for the time being." He began tapping the strong-room wall with a hammer. Then he put a gumdrop in his mouth. He'd brought all his gear in a canvas cricket bag, which any policeman would suspect since no one played cricket in February.

"Chisel," he said to Leigh. He chipped at the brick, shoulder-high, two feet from the corner. He made a hole about a finger-width across and a few inches deep.

Ted had made his connections and plugged in the drill.

Irons said to Leigh, "Carpets. She'll know where they are."

We got one from Smith-Williams's office, one from Grant Stokes's, one from the passage. When we dragged them back, Irons was peeling paper off slim sticks of a yellowish puttylike substance. He began to press some into the hole. Ted had pulled off his mask and was tinkering with thin wire and a little dry-cell battery. Leigh pulled off his stocking; a relief to see his face.

Irons had filled up the hole. Two wires were projecting, and he plugged the end with Plasticine. He muttered to Leigh, "How about taking her ladyship upstairs?"

I went up the stairs with Leigh. He was far more tense than I was. Then the explosion, a heavy vibration in the building.

When we went down, Irons was pulling away the remains of the carpets. "It's got to be taken gently. We can't afford too much row. Another couple of charges'll do the trick."

"How long is that going to take?" I asked.

"Ten minutes each maybe. We'll need more carpets. How would it be, dear, if you made us a cup of tea?"

I MADE THEM TEA in the tiny kitchen by the light of a pencil torch. Should have been slugs of whisky; this was too prosaic, too homely. But it lowered our temperature; maybe Irons, the pro, knew this. To him this was a night like others. He'd done this all his life; he'd been in jail three times, he said. He was a skilled workman whose work happened to be antisocial.

Ted Sandymount took a cup of tea up to Len when he went to telephone Safeguards headquarters. Last night Ted had been on the roof locating the wire. Tonight he had been up there listening to calls, so he knew the code word *Harrogate* and the sort of conversation that passed. Every time he called increased the risk. He could pass for McCarthy, a cockney like himself; but he couldn't imitate Gaskell's West Country voice, and headquarters would expect Gaskell to take his turn.

While I was putting away the cups there was a second, louder vibration. I wondered how far it would travel. This old building abutted on others in which people might be sleeping or a watchman patrolling. For a time I didn't go back. Irons had said to keep away because of the fumes, so I sat on a high stool and tried to peer through the frosted-glass window. There was a brightish light outside but I couldn't locate it . . . it might be the headlights of the first police car . . .

Leigh came in.

"Will it be long?" I said. "There's only about four hours left."

"It'll do."

There was a third vibration. Cups rattled in the cupboard. Leigh said, "Let's go."

The strong-room wall consisted of fourteen inches of brickwork—three bricks thick, with cement between. The first and second explosions had breached two layers. The third had blown a sizable hole into the room itself. Ted was working with a pick, widening the opening to climb through. When it was done Irons went in and we followed.

He switched on the light. The room was a mess—part of a steel filing cabinet blown away, papers scattered, ledgers on the floor, the room acrid with the smell of the last explosion. Irons took off



his gloves and fingered the safe with the ends of his blunt fingers. The safe stood about four feet high and three broad. It was finished in gray enamel and the long, slim door handle and the keyhole guard were chromium plate.

Irons put in another gumdrop. "Newer than I reckoned on," he said. "They've messed their numbers about, just to be awkward. First we'll have this key guard off."

"How long will it take?" Leigh asked.

"Ah . . . that's yet to be known. There was big changes between 'fifty-three and 'fifty-six. They started making safes with an outer and inner lining of steel, and between them was a new alloy. You can drill *through* it all right, but it's hours of work. I'm not sure about Pemberton's. It's years since I've had a go at one."

He inserted a thin tube into the keyhole. At its end was a battery and a switch. He switched it on, bent to peer along the barrel into the keyhole, then withdrew his probe. "It looks about a 'fifty-six. I'll drill for a bit and see."

Leigh passed him the drill, which Ted had connected. The shrill whine began.

Ted looked at his watch. "Twenty to three," he said. "I'll go up to ring them. Come with me, Leigh. We've got to force an entry. It shouldn't look as if we were let in."

THE DRILL had stopped. Irons was changing the bit for a finer one. I moved some broken bricks so they would be less in the way. Footsteps. Ted.

"It's the reinforced type," Irons said.

"Hell's fire. What now?"

"We'll think a bit." Irons took out another gumdrop. "Done your break-in?"

"Yes. Second-floor window. You can get to it by crossing the parapet from next door. I've still got to cut the wires of the alarms."

Leigh came in, his face flushed and tense.

Irons said, "Drilling will take me the best part of three hours."

"Three—" said Ted. "What will you do? Try gelly?"

Irons tapped the safe. "Most safes since the war have this anti-

blowing device. If you blow the lock with gelly, you release a spring that lets a new bolt fall into place. Then you have to drill holes in the door and find out where the bolt is and lever it up. So you're worse off than ever. But there's ways of cheating. I'll try just a baby charge."

Ted said, "Those phone calls give me the willies. Bloke at the other end wanted to chat, said it looked as if the fog was coming back . . . next time we'll be talking about wives!"

Irons was squeezing yellow gelignite into the keyhole, then gently pressing it in with a pencil. "Look," said Ted. "There's ten minutes before the next call. We'll fix those alarms. We can't help here, can we?"

"No," said Irons composedly. "No one can help."

Ted and Leigh went off. Irons looked at me sidelong. "It's no good getting in a flap. Opening a safe's one of those jobs where you've got to use your loaf. Make a mistake and you add hours to the work. Now this safe—it's strong and not too old, as safes go." He covered the keyhole with Plasticine and trailed the thin wires across the floor. "I'd advise you to keep out of here, else you'll have a headache—"

The lights went out.

I heard Irons curse in the darkness. Then he put on a pencil torch. The light traveled round the strong room. For the first time he was rattled; I could hear him breathing.

Dead silence. Then muffled voices, soft footsteps. Above us something was knocked over; Irons moved quickly behind one of the cabinets. Torch out. Darkness. Then a torch flickered through the hole. "Where are you?" Leigh's voice.

"Herel!" I said.

"The bloody lights have fused," he said. "John—"

Irons put on his torch. Leigh's stocking-flattened face peered in like something out of a horror film.

"We were fixing the alarm. Ted said if we didn't cut them, no one would believe it was an outside job. He must have crossed the wires."

"Damn you," said Irons, and the words sounded worse than an

obscurity. "You give me a right shock. What's he doing now?"

"He's gone to check with Len, and see the guards are safe. Where are the fuse boxes, Deborah?"

"Damn the fuse boxes," Irons said. "We got to get a move on." To me: "You take both torches, hold them so's we can see. Help me with this safe, Leigh. I want it turned side-on to those shelves. But for Pete's sake watch the wires!"

Ted came clattering down the stairs and pushed his way in, scattering mortar and broken brick. "Deb, d'you know where the fuses are? I goofed big. Any passing copper might notice—"

I said, "There are electric boxes in the kitchen—"

"What's the time, Ted?" Irons said.

"Time for that call. You go with Deb, Leigh, see if—"

"I want Leigh *here!*" said Irons. "I got to move this safe—"

"You go, then," Ted said, grasping my arm so that I winced. "See if you're right, but don't touch *anything*."

He went flat-footed up the stairs as I made for the kitchen. I was right: there were rows of fuse boxes. I went back to the strong room, found the two men, by the light of a pencil torch, trying to shift the safe away from the wall with crowbars. Irons said, "Now *together!*" It moved an inch.

Leigh leaned exhaustedly against the safe, wiping his sweating face with the mask. "What are you getting at?" he asked Irons.

"This anti-blowing device. Supposing it takes that new bolt half a second to fall into place? Well, if the charge of gelly is just enough to crack the lock without jamming the handle, and someone turns the handle just when the charges goes off, it will open before the new locking bolt falls. Right?"

"Any fool who turned the handle when the charge went off'd lose his hand."

"I know, man, I know! That's why I brought this." Irons rummaged in his cricket bag and brought out a bicycle tire. "It's got to go from the safe handle to that shelf bracket. But we must move the safe another six or eight inches."

Leigh bent to help again. Ted looked in and asked me to show him the fuse boxes. We went to the kitchen.



"Was it all right—the phone call?" I asked.

"Yes, it was another bloke." He found the main fuse, repaired it with a bit of old fuse wire. As he pulled down the switches again, the pilot light outside the kitchen door came on.

We went back to the strong room, now fully lighted. Ted took over from Irons and, with infinite stress, he and Leigh moved the safe a few more inches. Irons looped the tire round the steel shelf bracket, then stretched it to loop over the safe handle. Under his directions Leigh and Ted levered the safe away again until the tension on the tire could grow no more. Satisfied, Irons paid out the trailing ends of wire until they were through the hole into the passage. We went out while Irons fixed the carpets to deaden the blast; then he followed us and we all crouched down. I watched Irons connect one of his wires to the battery and then just touch the terminal with the other.

The explosion in the confined space hit the ears like a gunshot; the basement echoed and vibrated. Irons led the way back in, pulled away the carpets. The tire had been blown right off, but the handle had turned. Irons pulled it. The safe door opened.

I HAD SEEN them in the showcases. I had seen others just as beautiful and valuable. But because of what we had done, these jewels had a special and terrible significance. All the sweat and risk and terror for a few glittering bits of mineral stone. It seemed ridiculous, slightly obscene. The three men seemed startled, without purpose. Then Ted picked up an attaché case, and the jewels were taken out of their boxes and dropped into the cotton wool with which the case was lined. I looked at Leigh. Tension stretched the muscles of his face and drew in his mouth.

Irons was wiping the safe, every part he could have touched without his gloves. It was twenty-five minutes to four. Ted saw me look at my watch. "If we're ready in ten minutes I'll put the call through just before we skip. That'll give us thirty-five minutes before anyone gets suspicious. Nearly through, John?"

"Just to pack my things."

"I'll come with you in the Mini," Leigh said to me.

"I got to deliver the attaché case," said Ted, twitching as if he had a fly on his nose. "You come with me, John?"

"Yes. We got to drop Len too." Irons was stowing his things methodically, like a plumber at the end of his day.

"Ready?" Leigh asked me.

"Yes," I said coolly. Heavens, was I becoming practiced at this? In five hours I was due back at Whittington's.

Anxious last-minute searches. Anything forgotten? A button? A fingerprint? A handkerchief? A torn coat leaving a thread behind? A cigarette butt? A pencil? A footprint? They all dragged on their masks. I tied the scarf round my hair so there was a piece left to go over my face.

We went up the stairs. Ted, carrying the attaché case, went into the telephone room. We sat on settees in the first showroom, like clients waiting for the auction to begin. It was due to start in seven hours.

The telephone-room door opened and Len came in to us. "You've been some bloody time!" he said through his stocking. "I been half dying in this thing."

"Shut your gob!" said Irons.

I looked at my watch. A quarter to four. I heard the ring of the telephone as Ted lifted it. For the last time tonight the code word *Harrogate* was being used. At four fifteen there would be no call. At four twenty the guard at the other end would send a general alert. By four thirty at the *very* latest the emergency squad of Safeguards would be at the building, probably with police. Pains in my stomach. I kept thinking I'd dropped a comb, or left my handkerchief in the strong room.

Ted came out. "Right. Let's go."

Down the passage to the door. Ted shot the bolts back, opened it, peered out. A fine misty light. The faint humming noise of London. Ted slipped out. Len followed. Then I. Then Leigh. Irons gently closed the door behind him. Pulling off masks.

Leigh took my arm. We left the others and stepped into the sodium light of Bruton Yard. Silent cars. Black shadows striping the concrete. The tabby cat mewed round my legs, but I couldn't

stop to stroke her. We turned left into Bruton Street. A car passed us, chauffeur-driven. Safe. A taxi stopped at the corner, a man paying it off. Bruton Street a mile long. The corner at last. Berkeley Square. The big car showrooms. *Very* bright. We had to walk a quarter of the way round the square to reach the car. Two policemen stood talking at the entrance to Berkeley Street. Leigh changed sides to block me from their view.

We crossed diagonally. The policemen had their backs to us, but at fifty yards short of the Mini, Leigh stopped. "Wait. I don't want them to see us get into the car."

They stood there talking while the green lights went yellow, went red, went yellow-red, went green again. Someone was approaching us. Leigh put his arms round me and began to nuzzle his head against my scarved hair. A single man, walking slowly. He went past. The two policemen turned and walked slowly west.

"Now." The last fifty yards. He went ahead, unlocked the door of the car, was whirring the starter as I got in. We drove off.

WHEN I GOT home I was sick. My head ached as if my skull was opening and shutting. Leigh had a headache too. We used the last of the aspirin, but it was impossible to sleep. I was sick again and at seven o'clock felt terrible.

Leigh was frantic. The whole plan might come to bits if I didn't turn up at nine thirty. If I'd gone home as planned none of this would have happened: Irons had warned about the gelignite.

At seven thirty he went out for aspirin and gave me some in brandy. This made me sick again. I went back to bed.

Leigh said, "Look, love, take it absolutely easy for another hour. Then get up slowly and I'll drive you there."

He switched on the radio at eight but there was no mention of what we listened for. At a quarter to nine I took a bath. He coaxed me to try to eat, but the sight of food was enough. I took another three aspirin in tea, and my head began to throb less violently. I could move without nausea. He watched me like a man watching a racehorse on which he's staked his fortune.

I can't express the dread I had of going back to Whittington's.

It seemed inconceivable that everyone shouldn't know what I'd done, that I wouldn't show it on my face. Back in the car—both legs shaky and weak. Leigh talked all the time as he drove, maybe trying to take my mind off what was ahead. As he put me down at the corner of Grafton Street, he said, "Get through today and we're on velvet. Remember, love, you're doing it for our marriage—God help you—for our setting up in business. I wish I could help you. I'm keeping my fingers crossed. I'll not come for you tonight, the less I hang around here the safer. But I'll be waiting for you, Deborah."

"I feel I *look* awful."

"You don't. That bit of makeup has given you a top-of-the-milk look. Nobody'd think a thing. Listen, when you go in, don't be remembering what's happened. Think about our holiday in Spain—we could go there for our honeymoon."

I got out. I could see the entrance to Whittington's, and outside I could see two cars with blue lamps on their roofs.

#### CHAPTER XV

"COME IN," said Detective Inspector Malcolm. "Miss—er—Dainton? Sit down, please. Just a few routine inquiries."

Peter Greeley's office on the ground floor; just three of us, the other a constable taking things down.

"You've been with the firm—is it seven and a half years?"

"Yes. It will be eight in May."

So far, less trouble than I'd thought. All in such confusion that no one had time to remark on pale face or tired eyes. Place closed to the public, staff sitting about in one big showroom, police everywhere. We hadn't been allowed downstairs. It was to allow the police a free hand—fingerprints—photographs.

In answer to Inspector Malcolm's questions, I said I had left last night at about half past six. I hadn't seen the guards.

"Do you usually see them?"

"Not unless I stay late."

"Who was in your office when you left?"

"Nobody. Miss Fent had gone. Mr. Smith-Williams was still in his office—talking to one of our attendants, Davidson."

"Which door did you leave by?"

"The back entrance, into Bruton Yard."

"Why? Was that usual?"

"Sometimes I leave one way, sometimes the other."

"Did anyone see you leave?"

"I can't remember. Most people had left by then."

"Was the door open or shut?"

"Shut. But not locked."

"Did you see anyone loitering near the door?"

"No."

"Was it possible for someone to come in that way, unseen by any of the staff, and hide in the building?"

"I don't know. I suppose it could have happened."

Out of the corner of my eye I could see the liquor cabinet, still open, the bottles pushed to one side, the alarm switches at the off position; one glass missing. I had thrown it in the river.

"Where do you live, Miss Dainton?"

It had to be faced. "At Number Twenty-three, The Lane, Rotherhithe."

"Do you live alone?"

"No. I live with a Mr. Leigh Hartley."

"You're not—er—married to Mr. Hartley?"

"Mr. Hartley's already married, but trying to get a divorce."

"How long have you been living there, Miss Dainton?"

"Since—it would be last October."

"Before that?"

I explained that I had lived at my parents' house in Hampstead until last June, and then with my sister in Ennismore Gardens.

"How long have you known Mr. Hartley?"

"Since last April."

"What does he do for a living?"

"He's a clerk in Rodwell and Lloyd."

"Does this firm know of your association with Mr. Hartley?"

"I don't think so."

Inspector Malcolm plucked at a scar on his lip. "Do your parents mind your living in Rotherhithe?"

"They have three daughters. We all live away from home."

"Yes. It's the trend these days, isn't it. I have a daughter myself who'll soon be wanting to spread her wings. More's the pity . . . Well, thank you, Miss Dainton, that's all. I hope you won't mind having your fingerprints taken. We're doing the whole staff."

"No, of course not." I got up as he did.

"Miss Dainton, did you know how the alarm system worked?"

I would have been glad of my stick for support. "I knew there was one. . . ." Hard to keep one's eyes from that cabinet . . . more natural to let them stray. I let them stray.

He said, "Ah, I see you know where the switches were."

"I knew there were switches there. I didn't know what they did. I was in here at Christmas when Mr. Greeley opened the cabinet and took out some bottles."

"We're trying to establish how many people knew how the alarms worked. Whoever broke in had a close knowledge of the whole setup. If a fair number of people knew of it, one or another may have talked—quite innocently."

"I suppose we all knew a little," I said. "But I don't think any one knew enough to be helpful to a thief."

"You'd be surprised what people can pick up," said Malcolm. "They piece bits of information together and build up a picture. The really good finger man, as he's called, is very astute."

AT TWELVE Peter Greeley sent us all home. We could only get in the way of investigations. In the building there were at least six plainclothes policemen; also a man from Scotland Yard's science laboratory, a photographer, a safe specialist from Pemberton's, an insurance adjuster from Lloyds, and the chairman of Safeguards.

"Business as usual tomorrow," Peter Greeley said, smiling grimly. "This is just one sale that won't take place—for the present."

The directors were taking it philosophically. They were fully

insured and it was the only sensible way to take it. Leigh had been right—burglary when it didn't involve violence was an impersonal thing. Apart from McCarthy with his bruised head, nobody was *suffering* for this theft.

I sat in the bus and read the afternoon paper. WEST END JEWEL HAUL. NIGHT RAIDERS GRAB £200,000. . . . I had a feeling that I was being observed by a Godlike eye trained on me from Scotland Yard. When would it stop? Not for months. Detectives, patiently ferreting.

THE STUDIO windows let in a fluid, shimmering, wintry light, born of sky and river. Wind was blowing low clouds gustily across, but here and there were streaks of green of a quite improbable color, put there by an inspired artist. I switched on a heater and kicked off my shoes and warmed my feet.

I now realized that in this enterprise neither Leigh nor I had seen far enough. How *could* we buy the shop while the police were searching and ferreting? A young woman from Whittington's who had left her family to go and live with an unknown artist-clerk in Rotherhithe would be very much under their eye. Supposing she and the man suddenly produced seven thousand pounds to *buy* a shop? Wouldn't they ask where it came from?

Why had the inspector suggested to me that someone might have come in through the back entrance and hidden himself away? Did they already suspect that the forced window was a fake? If so, there was *great* danger. Because a faked break-in could only have been intended to divert suspicion from somebody on the staff of Whittington's.

Headache threatening. I made some tea, then lay on the bed and drank it. It was like a shot of morphine after pain. Anxieties began to relax. The police might suspect much but they would have to prove it. They might not suspect at all . . .

I must have dozed for upwards of an hour. The bell woke me. Half past two. I started up. Police? As I opened the door a woman was turning away. She was the one I had seen here before, Leigh's father's next-door neighbor.

I smiled in relief. "Did you want Leigh?"

"Well, I just called . . . He's not in, I suppose?"

"He won't be back till five thirty. Can I give him a message?"

"Well, no. That is, I left a note . . . I didn't expect to find . . ."

She seemed scared. Good-looking, fortyish, fresh skin, good eyes, pleasant voice. Her letter had been pushed under the door.

I picked it up. "You're a neighbor of Leigh's father, aren't you?"

A shadow crossed her face. "Is that what he says?"

"I thought he did. Do come in, it's cold."

She hesitated. "Leigh told me not to come round, Miss—er—"

"Dainton. Well, he won't be home for hours. I'm just making some tea. Like a cup?" I felt a need for ordinary decent female company.

She came in nervously. I put her letter on the table and encouraged her into a chair by the electric heater while I made the tea. I brought it on a tray. We sat and sipped together.

"Is Mr. Hartley not well again?" I asked.

She flushed. "Leigh's told you that, has he? He gets bronchitis, and this winter it's much worse. We wonder if he'll be able to keep his job. He's not due for a pension for five years."

"D'you want Leigh to go and see him?"

"Yes, I do. He hasn't been near us for nearly a year. Of course Joe—my husband—didn't approve of the way he was living, and said so. But it would do him good to see Leigh."

Light dawning. "You must be Mr. Hartley's second wife—Leigh's stepmother. I wonder why he never told me!"

The woman sipped her tea. "No, I'm not his second wife, I'm his first. I don't know why Leigh should be ashamed of me!"

Emotion then. Two women, both rather weepy. Soothe her agitation while trying to soothe something in me. Alarm bell. Why?

"I expect I misunderstood him, Mrs. Hartley."

"No, no, that's what he likes people to think. He likes to make things up, to think things are different from what they are. To be motherless—it's an attitude. His schoolmaster said it was his way of escaping from reality. His dad used to get cross. . . . I hope it hasn't upset you, Miss Dainton. You won't let it get back to him?"



"No, of course I won't. But"—clinging to a last disbelief—"you look too young."

"Oh, thank you. I'm forty-four. Twenty-two when Leigh was born." She saw something in my expression. "Did you think Leigh was older? I'm always *talking* too much."

"No, no. It doesn't matter." My hands very cold.

She said, "What lovely hair you've got, Miss Dainton. Has Leigh painted you?"

"Once. Not as often as he painted his wife." I waited.

"Oh, Lorne," said Mrs. Hartley. "I hardly knew her."

So that was all right. Not just an excuse not to marry me.

Mrs. Hartley said, "Only twenty at the time. Leigh is impulsive. I met Lorne for the first time at the church."

"Was this in Swindon?"

"No, a church near here."

"Do you live in Swindon—or in Clapham?"

"In Clapham. I've been there all my married life."

"And Leigh lived with you?"

"Yes—until he left home. His dad was against him leaving at nineteen without a proper job. Working for this Mr. Foil in his shop."

"Did he work for Mr. Foil?"

"Oh yes, before he came here. His dad wanted him to go on the railways, he never believed in Leigh's painting. But you think he's a good painter, don't you, Miss Dainton?"

"Oh yes. He's good. Are you artistic yourself?" I asked.

"No. I never could draw at all."

The clouds were reflecting a reddening sun. The derricks on the other bank looked like flamingoes bending to drink at a lake. She went on: "Leigh's dad says I spoiled him, him being an only-child, but I didn't, Miss Dainton; he was brought up well. He'll make good yet, I'm always saying to Joe. . . . I must go. It was lovely tea."

"Don't go. Did you say Leigh was an only child?"

"Yes. Joe and I met in the war when I was in the ATS. After a couple of years we got married and I had Leigh. After Leigh started to school, I went into service, daily woman, by the hour.

You get paid quite well. We could buy things that we couldn't have on Joe's money. A refrigerator. Spring mattresses. A bicycle for Leigh."

"Was it your husband's sister who left Leigh the legacy?"

"What?" She stared. "Oh, that . . . no, it was his grannie, Joe's mother. She didn't leave any money, she left a little house, and we sold that. Half went to Joe and half to Leigh . . . He's spent it long since. That's what Joe doesn't like—living above yourself. He thinks Mr. Foil is the wrong influence." Mrs. Hartley got up. "I really must go. Leigh's told me about you, of course; but he—he sort of doesn't want us in his new life."

"If you were my mother," I said, "I'd want you in my life."

She flushed. "Oh, d'you mean it? It's lovely to hear you say that . . . Lovely. Don't tell him I've been here, will you, dear."

HE GOT back at six. Clear eyes—like his mother's—narrow nose, curly, untidy hair, heavy lids. My love. My lying love.

He was full of questions about Whittington's, wanted to know every detail. The jewelry, he said, had gone to Jack Foil. In two or three days it would be moved by stages to Amsterdam, and Jack was out of London making the contacts. The money would take time to come through.

Until Mrs. Hartley's visit I'd been pressed by fears of the police, but now I felt unable to discuss them with him. I'd been standing on rock and part of the rock was quicksand.

I handed him the letter and he opened it. "From your father?"

"Well, more or less. He wants me to go and see him."

"Was it your father's sister who left you this legacy?"

"What? Oh . . . sort of. It was an aunt."

"How much did she leave you, Leigh?"

He kissed me. "It wasn't much, it's gone. But now there's a lovely lot to come. Gosh, I was scared last night. D'you remember how I snapped at you when you came back? Sheer funk."

"I was scared myself."

"You didn't show it. You were marvelous. I shall never forget the way you played along right through to the end."

"That's the way I'd like it, to be able to play along right through to the end."

He shifted uneasily, sensing something in my voice, I suppose.

I said, "I never knew you'd worked for Jack Foil in his shop."

"Who told you?"

"Ted."

He looked at me, his gaze centered between my eyes, not into them. "Yes, I worked for Jack for about nine months before I got the legacy and moved in here."

"Was this after you married Lorne or before?"

"Oh, before. Look, Deb, I've got to go out again. I—"

"How did you first meet Jack Foil? You've never told me."

"In a pub. Ted and then Jack. I was in a dead-end job pushing a pen, but aching to paint. Jack said he'd like to see some of my stuff, and he took one for his antique shop—and sold it, *and* sold it! He took an interest from the start. The first professional ever to see talent in what I did. And he's never lost faith!"

Leigh took up his leather jacket. "After I'd known him about six months he said would I like to work in his shop. I jumped at it, because it meant I could get time to paint. Look, I don't know what time I'll be back."

"Where are you going?"

"With Ted to ditch that old Austin. There's a slight risk that some copper might have taken the number while it was outside Whittington's. Should be back before ten. But don't wait up."

"Leigh," I said as he moved to go.

"Yes."

I looked at him, for some warmth, some reassuring glance which told me we were still two against the world.

"Oh, nothing."

He smiled cheerfully and was gone.

PROWLING TAXIS don't prowl in the East End. I got one at Tower Bridge. An address in the Old Brompton Road. I knew now where the poison lay. Lights flickering, green and red, safety and danger, love and hate. Jerk and stop, swing and turn,

stop and jerk. An hour's sleep last night. An hour today. But lack of sleep sometimes refines the perceptions. Lack of food too. In the last twenty-four hours, tea and brandy.

I got out, paid the driver. Eight o'clock. The shop was closed of course. *Sefton Antiques*. Even with his own shop Jack Foil was in the background. In the window were two Hepplewhite chairs, a Georgian silver teapot on a mahogany three-legged table.

Up the stairs at the side. I pressed the doorbell. The yapping of dogs. Footsteps. Doreen. Hair loose. Flowered housecoat. Dangling cigarette.

"Deborah! Why I . . ."

"I came round for a minute. D'you mind?"

"No, er . . . Lovely." I followed her as she flapped in mules through the greenhouse hall into the long living room.

"Jack isn't here. Did you want to see him?"

"No. Leigh's out. I was feeling lonely."

She sat down opposite me, offered me a drink, or coffee. I said no, thanks. Was she expecting Jack back tonight?

"I'm not sure, dear. He said not to wait up. Not that I'm likely to, after last night!"

I looked at her, startled. "Last night? What—"

"Well . . . it was this Silver Cross Charity Ball at the Hilton. Jack had often said he'd take me but I never thought he would. He took six of us—it must have cost him a bit. We didn't get home till after three!"

"Lovely," I said. "You are lucky." Expensive, but cheap as an alibi. "I think I will have coffee."

"Sure. It'll only take a minute." She was easier, with Jack not here. I must get something out of her. She flapped past the umbrella tree, dropped ash, went out.

Plants drooping, watching. Aquarium light. Good crockery. Get up to look at that. An open desk, four drawers. What to look for? Papers, letters, checkbook. Three or four minutes to make the coffee. I'd hear her coming in her mules. Pick up checkbook. *Sotheby's*, £295. *Cash*, £50. *Leigh Hartley*, £20. Letters . . . First drawer locked. Second drawer, travel folders, photographs;

third drawer, seed catalogues. Last drawer . . . a letter in Leigh's handwriting—

Slap, slap. I jumped back, shutting the drawer. She came in.

"This—is a lovely plate," I said.

"Oh, that—yes. You're an expert, aren't you?"

"Who told you?"

"Why, Jack. When we met the first time."

I took my coffee and we sipped and talked.

I said, "I suppose Jack still pays Leigh a salary?"

"Oh, that I wouldn't know. Jack's got a lot of irons in the fire. He has a meat business, you know, and a lumberyard."

"But Leigh comes here often, doesn't he?"

Doreen sipped her coffee and left a little brown mustache. "You're not jealous, dear, are you?"

"No, that's not what I mean. Leigh and I want to get married, and he's awfully evasive about money. I wondered if you knew."

"'Fraid not. But you tell Leigh to keep in with Jack. That's my advice, Deborah. If he keeps in with Jack he'll be all right. If he fell out with him, it might be all wrong."

"Tell me, Doreen, how long have you known my sister?"

"Your—sister? I never have."

"Yes, you have. Dr. Dainton."

"Oh, the tall girl. Oh, not very long."

"Longer than you've known me?"

"I can't remember." Doreen tightened her earring. "She came in the shop one day and Jack invited her up to see the plants."

"Did she talk about me?"

"I wouldn't know. Why?"

"When did she come to see the plants? Before last April?"

"It could have been."

THERE WAS A telephone box at the corner of Old Brompton Road. Press the coins in. Virginia's voice.

"Hello. It's Deborah here. Is Sarah in?"

"No, she's at the hospital."

Oh, damn, blast, damn. "D'you know when she'll be back?"

"Haven't the faintest. What's the matter? You sound agitated."

I took a grip of my voice. "No, it was just something I wanted to ask her. I'll try again in an hour or so."

"O.K., dear— I say, what about this robbery at your place? That was pretty sensational, wasn't it?"

"Yes, it was." Come to think of it, Doreen hadn't mentioned it. Didn't she know where I worked or wasn't she as innocent as she pretended?

"Any theories? D'you think it was an inside job?"

"I doubt it. Just a gang of smart crooks."

I hung up, and went home by bus. No little red car outside. I let myself in. I put on all the lights, stared round the room with its sagging, dusty velvet chairs, its tall windows, its stacked canvases. Outside, London glittered and glowed. Leigh's desk always stood open, papers and bills and receipts scattered. I used it to write letters and checks, but I had never pried into it. Only once, when he refused to tell me his debts, had I threatened to search it. Must *not* search it now. Sit and wait. Must not jump to conclusions. Must reserve judgment. Sit and wait.

#### CHAPTER XVI

AT TEN I went out to the telephone opposite the Brunel, the seedy pub that Leigh would never let me go in. Sarah still not home. As I returned Leigh was just parking his car.

"Hello, love. Been out somewhere?"

"Yes. I was ringing Sarah."

He followed me in. "Lack of a telephone's a damned nuisance. We shall *have* to afford it in our new place."

He took off his jacket and threw it towards the pegs behind the door. It fell. I picked it up and hung it with my own coat.

"All right about the car?" I asked.

"Yes, but it took some losing. What's the matter? You still look frightfully pale." He kissed me. "How's the head?"

"Better. But I'm tired after last night."

"I wouldn't have been surprised to find you in bed and asleep. D'you know," he gripped my arms and smiled into my eyes, "I don't feel tired. I reckon it's the excitement. Things have gone with such a bang. Whee-ee! Nobody's been here, I suppose?"

"Nobody. Shall I make you coffee?"

"I can if you're fagged."

He followed me into the kitchen. "I might have a bite if there is something."

"There's cheese and some eggs."

"Cheese'll do." I made the coffee while he foraged for cheese and crackers. I didn't know what I was going to say, if anything.

"What is our share going to be?" I asked.

"We'll have to wait for Jack for that. I'd say ten thousand or near it. Everything's gone like clockwork."

"So far."

"Why? What's wrong? Something is wrong. Deborah . . ."

"Perhaps it's only something wrong with me. The reaction."

"You should have gone to bed, love. You know how ill you were this morning. Phew! If you hadn't turned up at Whittington's as usual . . . I don't know what we should have done without you."

"You'd have done nothing," I said, pouring a cup of coffee. "There was nothing any of you could have done."

He watched me. "That's certainly true. Jack realizes that. What had Sarah got to say? Did she mention the robbery?"

"No. She wasn't in. But Virginia did. I said I thought it was some smart crooks." My blood was thumping painfully. If I attacked now I should have the advantage, but I should be too desperately upset to use it. Judge only on fact.

"How right you were." Leigh came across and stroked my forehead. "Bed for you, love. You're tired out. You'll feel quite different in the morning."

A COUPLE of detectives were still at Whittington's the next day. Men were repairing the wall of the strong room and the broken window, and other damage had already been put right. It was surprising, though, how much disorganization the burglary had

caused. Mr. Greeley said he'd consider it a favor if everyone would come in on Saturday morning to get the rooms back to normal.

At twelve forty-five I went out to lunch. Still slightly dazed. Usual busy café. I sat at a table for four, already occupied by two blond German girls. They smiled at me and went on talking.

Not hungry. I stared dismally down the menu and chose sole. While the waitress was getting it, I tried to ring Sarah again. The bell went endlessly on. Back at the table. A shadow blocking the light, coming to the vacant seat.

"Miss Dainton, how nice! Well met, as you might say."

The shadow that lay across us all.

"Excuse me, ladies. These small tables are very difficult. No, please don't move."

Cuffs showing against the furry wrists. Diamond links. He would have passed for many things other than what I knew him to be; a well-to-do nightclub owner, a middle-grade divorce solicitor. He ordered sausage and mashed potatoes. "I often eat here when I've been to Sotheby's."

"We're a bit disordered at Whittington's," I said, pulses beating suffocatingly, "owing to the burglary."

"I read about it. Clever, wasn't it. Very clever indeed."

"We don't know yet."

"How do you mean?"

"Well . . . whether they'll be caught."

Pebbles glinting like prisms, he looked at the German girls. "I doubt if they will be. People who plan such a clever robbery . . . You called to see me last night."

"Yes . . . Well, no, I called to see Doreen."

"She said you looked worried."

"I expect it was just—late nights and that sort of thing."

"Asking her questions. I thought perhaps you were worried. Doreen said you were asking how long we had known your sister."

"Yes, well, we just talked. Leigh was out. I felt lonely. I thought I'd call. Doreen seemed pleased."



"Oh, yes. She's a friendly girl." Our food had come. He piled floury potatoes on his fork. "She said you were asking about Leigh."

"We talked about him. It's natural, isn't it?"

He smiled. "German. Such an ugly language. And yet it sounds pretty, coming out of pretty mouths."

"Please?" said the blond girl.

"I beg pardon. I was thinking aloud." To me he said: "You were—first-class the other night. Leigh and Ted told me. It's what I expected. The elite person stands up to the test."

"Thank you." I passed him the tomato sauce.

"But," he said, "the higher strung you are, the worse the aftermath is. Don't let it get into your system." He eased his stomach against the tabletop. "All is going nicely now. Your part is over. My part—the hardest in some ways—is just beginning. All will be well. Ask no questions. It's better really."

"Is it?"

"Just now we've got to be careful. Later on, we might plan a little holiday together, just the four of us. Doreen has quite a liking for you—as I have. Have you ever been to Majorca?"

"No." •

"We might go there this summer, the four of us."

I hadn't finished the sole but I put my knife and fork together. I watched him cut a slice of sausage.

He said, "But just for the present, better not call. Later on we can celebrate, you and Leigh and Doreen and me."

"I must go," I said.

"So soon? D'you know, Miss Dainton, I was going to say—oh, but it sounds boastful—I was going to say that when a windfall like this comes in I always give some of it away. To waifs and strays, or the physically handicapped. It helps."

"What?" I said bluntly. "How does it help?"

"It helps to be able to. D'you know that saying—'The rent we pay for our room on earth.' That's how I feel when a windfall comes in."

"I'll remember that," I said.

LEIGH HAD SAID HE WOULD NOT be back early tonight so I might go round to see Sarah. During the afternoon the tension built up in me so I couldn't concentrate. Numbers and pottery marks blurred, voices reached me from a distance. Twice Mary Fent asked me if I was ill.

I left as it was getting dark. People drifting away to trains and movies and home and TV and books and bed. The ordinary human life which somewhere I had lost.

I couldn't face the possibility of a fruitless journey to Ennismore Gardens. Into a telephone booth. Dial.

"Sarah?"

"Deborah? Sorry I was out last night. How are you? Did the robbery upset you?"

"I'm all right. Sarah, I wanted to ask you something. D'you remember when Leigh and I met?"

"Do I not! When I threw that party I didn't realize I was laying a gunpowder trail!"

"Before that night—did you know Leigh well?"

"No, I'd met him twice, with David Hambro."

"Did he know you had a sister?"

"He probably knew I had two. So what?"

"I'm trying to find out whether he knew that one of your sisters was medical and the other wasn't. Did he know *before* he met me? Try to think."

"What on earth— Yes, I think he asked me about my family."

"Did he—" I choked, not able to go on.

"What is it, darling? Are you upset?"

"I'm laughing. It's a silly joke." I snorted and held my throat. "You remember that apple-green Rockingham plate you and Arabella bought me for my birthday before last. Where did you buy it?"

"From that shop in Old Brompton Road. That friend of Leigh's who was at your fireworks party. Foil."

"I suppose he asked you in to see his indoor plants?"

"Not then, later. It was the following Christmastime."

"Thank you, darling, that was what I wanted to know."

STILL SOME MISTAKE? Still only a hurch? Pray that it was. Pray that Leigh would be home after all, to talk, to comfort, to reassure. To lie?

But there was no car outside the studio when I let myself in. I was feeling queer. I slumped in a chair in the kitchen, put a damp tea towel to my head. I seemed to lose awareness of my own identity. Minutes passed. Then I got up, took off my coat, went into the studio.

Leigh's desk. Letters from Jack Foil? But to search it would be to make a move of enmity—the step that was not retraceable. Wait until Leigh came and have it out with him? But how could you have it out with a man you loved but did not trust? Love destroyed judgment, suspicion destroyed love.

Look through the evening paper. Already Whittington's was forgotten. A new parking scheme, a baronet's divorce, a story of rape. I threw the paper on the floor, picked up a magazine, but that soon followed it. Come soon, Leigh, come soon.

I went to the desk. It had three drawers, six cubbyholes above, a flap that let down, one brass support broken. Ink and paint stains, papers overflowing. Suddenly I began. I started at the top left-hand cubbyhole and searched methodically, until the sweat came out on my forehead and my hands were trembling. Nothing. But the bottom drawer was locked.

I went into the kitchen and put on the kettle for coffee and came back with an iron rod Leigh had found by the river. It had a beaten end like a screwdriver. It split the wood all round the lock, but it opened the drawer. I felt as if I were destroying some part of Leigh, and some part of myself.

Books, letters, receipts. Catalogue from a men's shop; travel folder for Spain; photo of his mother; passport (he'd be twenty-three in April); copy of the will of Annie Hartley, deceased; tenancy agreement for the studio.

Letters. "Dear Leigh, I don't understand why you never came near us all through Christmas, the present was nice, thank you, but it isn't the same as you calling in for an hour. Your Dad."

Lorne's dated last May: "Dear Leigh. It's no good writing like

that because its all over between us. And its no manner of good raking up Stevie. He never ment a thing to me as you well know. Please send my manicur set. I've paid two of the bills you sent but dont think I should pay the groceries. Lorne."

Tin box. Unlocked. About twenty pounds in notes. Four or five brief scrawls on lined paper. One said: "This is the final from the Vosper thing. You did well to get onto it so quick, but the boys in Switzerland did the work so they take the big cut. J.F."

Another said: "Take her to Spain. Sunshine is useful for softening ladies up. I'll foot the bill. J.F."

THE WATER had boiled away. The kitchen was full of steam. I switched off the electricity and tried to vomit in the sink. Then I went into the tiny bedroom and collapsed on the bed.

I was walking hand in hand with Leigh across the soft green slope towards Beachy Head. It waved like a sea, and there were toadstools like yellow cushions. Leigh's hand was clammy, and I understood that he was a part of the decay of the world. All was poison, corruption and death. The contamination of disease that I had suffered at the age of ten was nothing to the contamination that my mind and soul suffered now. The room was beginning slowly to go round. I rolled off the bed onto the floor. For a time I made no move, hoping it would go away, the fetid emanation of the truth.

A clock chimed the half hour. Get slowly to feet. Weak, cold. On top of the wardrobe were my two suitcases. Shakily I lifted one down. Underclothes, stockings, skirts, hardly know where to begin. Shoes, frocks. And the porcelain—"Dear Leigh, please send me the Coalport plate painted with flowers by William Cook. I have paid the two bills but not the groceries . . ."

Hands shaking, I folded three frocks, two skirts, a couple of blouses; ten minutes to pack the case. Put it back on the wardrobe. I could not somehow begin on the next. Back into the studio. A ship was going past, the windows gaily lighted. I stood on the balcony to watch it, thinking of the fireworks party, when all had gone so well. Of New Year's Eve and the Very Lights and the

echoing sirens. And there was nothing that wasn't contaminated. I thought of all the time since April. Of learning to skate and learning to dance and learning to drive. Of learning to love.

I was shivering. Back inside, I put on a winter coat and scarf against a cold that was not the winter cold. One last point to clear up. I went out, walked to the telephone box opposite the Brunel. I looked up a Temple Bar number and dialed.

"Safeguards headquarters," said a man's voice.

I said, "I wonder if you could help me. I wanted to know how Mr. Evans was. Whether he was back on duty."

"I'm sorry, we don't answer personal calls."

"Oh, *I'm* sorry. This is his niece. I understood he'd been ill."

"Hold the line, please." A pause. After a minute the same voice said, "What name was it?"

"Evans." I gave an apologetic laugh. "People call him Baker Evans."

"What's your name, caller?"

"Clara Evans."

"There's no one of that name in our organization."

"Are you sure?"

Another pause. A new voice. "Where are you calling from?"

"A call box. I rang to inquire about my uncle."

"Would you give me your full name and address, please."

"Clara Evans of—121 Sutton Street, Hampstead."

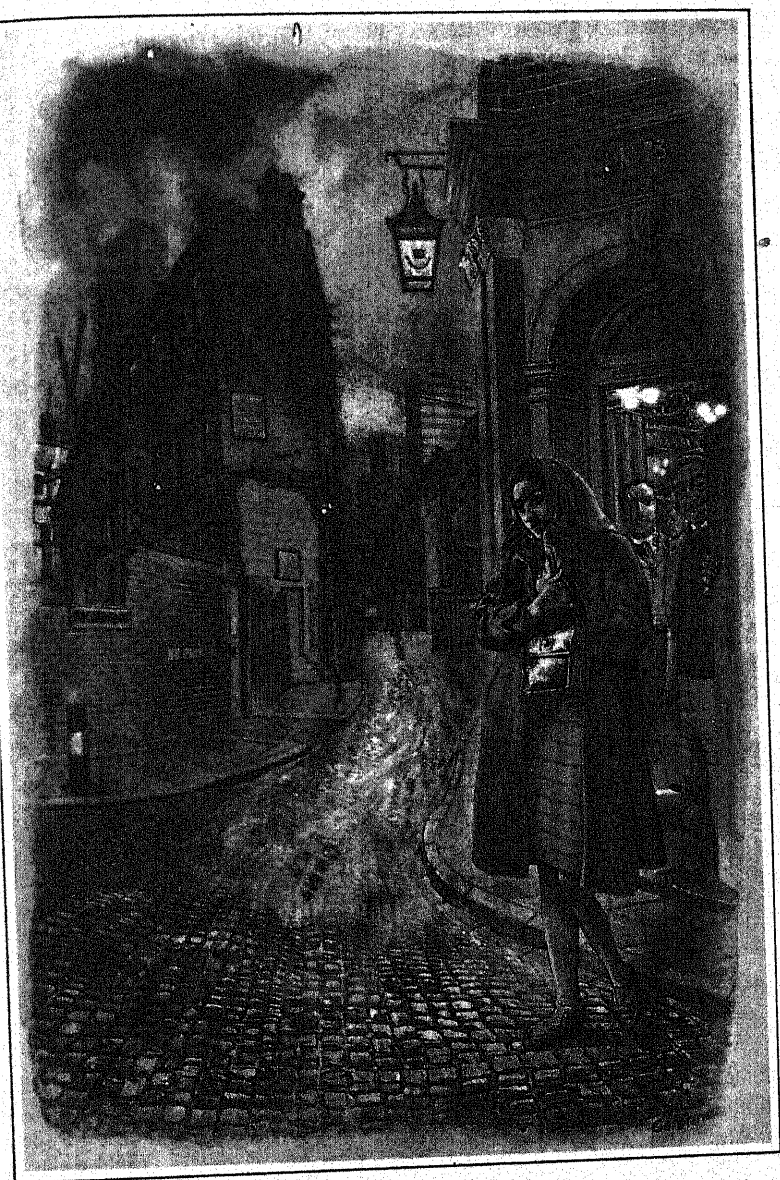
"What is the number of your call box?"

"Oh, ~~it~~ doesn't matter." I hung up.

I came out of the box, stood a minute leaning against the side, then crossed the road to the small seedy pub and went in. The barman was big and square-headed, and had had plastic surgery on his face. I ordered a brandy.

So deep had the knife gone in, that ordinary feelings no longer registered. Lame—it didn't matter. Venomous, assessing stares—they didn't matter. When I gave the wrong money, a girl in carpet slippers cackled. The brandy was harsh.

Prostitutes. Three Scandinavian seamen—blond, bony, bad types. A Slav, unshaven and drunk. Two spider-legged English boys with long hair. Two old women.



Silence. They were watching while I drank. The barman went on sweeping the counter with a dirty yellow rag.

"Lost your way, dear?" It was one of the old women.

I stared back at her. I knew as much of evil as these people. They couldn't harm me the way I'd already been harmed.

The barman said, "What's wrong wi' yer leg? Accident?"

The brandy was alight in me, and grief was turning to a terrible anger.

"Mine was a car," he said. "Went through the bleedin' screen. Twelve weeks in 'ospital. 'Nother o' the same?"

"Yes." This time I gave him the right money.

The Slav was standing beside me. "'Allo," he said, and put his hand against my thigh. I lifted the glass and looked at him with all the grief and anger and hatred. He stepped back.

I considered the idea of killing myself. I had no drugs; there was the river, of course. Or there was the alternative to suicide. . . . I finished the brandy. Somehow I got out of the pub and walked home. I was feeling stronger, colder, clearer. It was twenty minutes to nine when I got back. No car.

I went in and sat down at the desk. Maybe if I'd had someone to talk to: a friend, a sister, a priest. To talk, to rage, to weep. This poison should be drawn. Otherwise I felt I'd die.

Think. Whom would this affect? Everybody I knew and hated. Everybody I knew and loved. Think. This is another form of suicide, slower, more disgraceful, with perhaps some life to be lived at the end of it. This damns all, *far* more effectively than a corpse drifting out with the morning tide. This, too, is far worse for me. Death shames gossip, *de mortuis nil nisi bonum*; poor girl, it was a frightful pity. . . . I'm sorry for her parents. . . . Death is tidy. This solution is untidy and disgraceful. And full of the light of pure, baleful reason. But *this* is the one I want, God giving me strength.

Address the envelope. "Detective Inspector Malcolm. Scotland Yard, S.W.1." What I write is brief. There's no need to elaborate. A statement will do that. "I, Deborah Dainton. . ."

But I am explicit; Leigh Hartley, Ted Sandymount, Jack Foil.

We planned, *we* executed! There was an expert safecracker, but I never saw his face. Why implicate John Irons? He was no part of the conspiracy. I'm only stating my part and mentioning those who planned it. It flows quickly, easily off the pen, for there's no need to qualify or discriminate. I sign it, seal it in an envelope. A stamp handy in the drawer. Post it at once. Post it before . . .

"Hello, love," said Leigh. "Did you think I was never coming?"

## CHAPTER XVII

I GET UP. Still wearing coat, I put letter in left-hand pocket.

"Hullo. You are a bit late."

He followed me to the kitchen where I made coffee. He hadn't noticed the splintered drawer. He said, "You're still looking a bit flaked out. See anything of the police today?"

"They were still about."

"I reckon they haven't a clue." His eyes were clear, untroubled.

"They've asked me to go in to work tomorrow or Sunday."

"We ought to see about the shop tomorrow or Sunday."

"Yes," I said. "It was funny how we met, wasn't it?"

"Who? Us? Why?"

"You and I. If you hadn't come to Sarah's—none of this would have happened."

He stirred uneasily. "Do you regret it?"

"Oh, sometimes I think these things are designed."

"What d'you mean? It was the best day of *my* life, I promise you. This is the moment to look ahead—not back."

"Leigh, I met someone who knew you as a boy."

"What? Who?" His eyes were suddenly wary.

"It doesn't matter. This person says you haven't got two brothers. Also that your mother is still alive."

Leigh put down his coffee cup. His face had closed up.

"It's true?"

"Yes."

"But why tell me this?"



He rose. "I'm awfully sorry, love."

"But why? When you've lied before, there's been a purpose."

"These weren't meant to be lies. I—I lead myself on. Sometimes it's easier to make a thing up than to tell the truth."

"How many lies have you told me about Lorne?"

He turned. "None! I swear. Honest. Not one."

"How many other lies are there between us? What is true?"

"Everything! Oh, lovey, it's just this silly habit I've got sometimes. I make up a story like I make up a painting. A composition. If—if the river's green I paint it blue. But with a story, once I've told you—because it sounds dramatic—that my mother died young, I've got to go on with it. And I curse myself afterwards."

"Did you curse yourself for making up the story of having to wear your brother's outgrown clothes?"

He flushed. "Well, it was true in general. I *have* been making do all my life. I just wanted to make it more dramatic."

"Why did you say you lived in Swindon?"

"God knows. I keep—trying to build up a separate life. I keep trying to cut away from the old."

"So one of these days you'll be telling some nice new girl that you never knew anyone called Deborah Dainton."

"That's not true! You know it's not!" He came across and kissed me but I turned my face away. "Oh, look." He rubbed his nose against my ear. "You know different. This is basic."

"Do ~~it~~"

"Debby, Debby, use your loaf." This very gently. "When I met you I wanted to leave *everything* behind—all my past. But I *never* want to go on from here. This is where I belong."

We stood so for a moment. He said, "Let's go to bed, love. Let's curl up together quietly like, and everything will seem different in the morning."

We went to bed and he took me in his arms, but passively. We lay in silence. Over his shoulder I looked up at the packed suitcase on top of the wardrobe. The curtains were partly drawn back, and light from the river reflected on the ceiling like crinkly leaves turning. *This bed thy centre is, these walls, thy sphere.*

"You're still mad at me?"

"I was wondering what will happen to the swans when we're gone."

"When we're gone?"

"Well, if we take this shop."

"Oh, I suppose someone will take the place and feed them. I'll be a bit jealous of the people who take it."

"Perhaps you'd rather stay on."

He was silent. "What's wrong? I've upset you with these silly lies, but I thought you knew me well enough . . ."

"I thought I did. But I had a terrible dream."

"When? What about? Tell me if it'll help to kill it."

Pause. "About a man. Fat, middle-aged. An antique dealer."

Silence. "Any connection with Jack Foil?"

"I don't know. He—he went to all the sales. Sotheby's, Christy's, Whittington's. He saw all the beautiful things and he'd buy some, but he was greedy for more. He wanted the bigger things . . . to break in and steal them, but . . ."

I could feel the tension of the arm around me. "So?"

"It was hard to break in. Then one day a girl came into his shop looking for a present for her sister. It had to be good, as her sister was an expert on porcelain and held a position of responsibility at Whittington's."

"God, Deborah, what are you talking about?"

I lay quiet in his arms. "Want me to go on?"

"Yes."

"This antique dealer found out that the sister wasn't married and wasn't likely to be because she had a deformed leg. He had a lot of friends that he helped or patronized—among them a young man he was genuinely fond of. He paid him enough to live on in return for being at his beck and call. He suggested to the young man that he should meet the sister who worked at Whittington's. If it seemed promising territory he could try and make her—as the saying is."

Leigh roughly shifted his arm from round me, sat up, switched on the bedside light.



"He thought," I said, "that the young man might be able to get the girl obsessed with him. If that happened, breaking into Whittington's would be easy."

Leigh reached for a cigarette packet, pulled one out with fumbling fingers. "Who in God's name told you this?"

"I worked it out for myself. You don't deny it?"

He swallowed. "It's hard to deny. . . . But it's only half the truth."

"What's the other half?"

"Oh, Deborah, what a thing for you to find out! I—I don't know what to say. Who *told* you?"

"Who knows? Ted? Jack? Anyone else?"

"No. No, of course not. Oh, Deb, what a flaming mess! But if you guessed this, you must have worked out the rest too!"

I sat up. "What else should I know?"

"Well . . . it more or less began like that. But it hasn't ended that way, has it?"

"Hasn't it? I thought it had ended exactly that way."

He got out of bed, came and sat on my side of the bed. "D'you think I've been playacting all this time? I fell in love with you. You must have noticed that!"

"But when did it stop? When did the playacting stop?"

He had bent the cigarette. He flung it on the floor. "There wasn't an exact moment. But early on. You see—"

"You'll get cold sitting there. Put the heater on."

He kicked the switch with his bare foot. "You see—"

I said, "You came to that first party with instructions. Find the girl and make a fuss of her. Isn't that it?"

"It was a suggestion. But d'you think I'd have gone after someone I didn't like? *You* got me right from the start. I didn't need any pushing from behind."

The bars of the heater were reddening, like a sore place.

"But there must have been a point where there was a change. Was it before we went to Spain?"

"Yes, yes, long before. From the very beginning, I tell you. It pleased me to be able to suit them and suit myself, but I realized

how serious it was for me when you found I was married and cut me off. I couldn't get on without you."

"Certainly the scheme couldn't get on without me."

He put his hand on my arm. "I tell you it wasn't *like* that! I swear it wasn't. I've been crazy about you! I love you!"

"But when you fell in love with me, didn't it ever occur to you to stop 'using' me?"

"I needed money, *we* needed money. I'll never deceive you in anything important again! I *swear* it, Deb."

"You even used the information I let slip to get your friends to steal the Vosper tiara. Didn't it ever trouble you?"

"It troubled me like hell. I've felt a heel. But I've had one excuse, and that was that I was doing it for *you*. If—"

"You were doing it for me and for yourself and for Ted Sandymount and for Jack Foil. But chiefly for Jack Foil."

He swallowed and pushed a hand through his hair. His face in the shadowed light looked strangely handsome; his pajama jacket was unbuttoned and showed his white throat and strong young body. "All right, I'm a rotten stinking heel. But I *love* you. Doesn't that mean anything?"

I said, "The fish swallowed the bait and Jack Foil played the fish. There never was a man called Baker Evans, was there?"

"Baker Evans of the Safeguards, d'you mean? I didn't know that! I swear Jack told me—"

"Jack reasoned that if the plan could be prepared before I was asked to cooperate as a partner, and then this fictitious man fell ill, I'd give in and do his job. If he'd asked me at the beginning, I'd have turned it down with horror. It was tailor-made to fit my fears and my conscience."

"Now you're making him out cleverer than he really is."

"Once I'd taken the first step, he reasoned, each one would follow. How you must have talked about me, over the drinks!"

"I never have! I—"

"I'm not going to be much use to you from now on, am I? We can't have two robberies in the same place."

"You *can't* believe that our love has been a sham!"

"It's been a—*an* experience. But I'm no more use to Jack Foil. He may want you to do the same with some other girl."

His hand moved up my bare arm. "You know I want to marry you as soon as I'm free."

"I don't know anything!" I said passionately. "I don't know whether you've even been to a solicitor! I don't know if you've had Lorne watched! I don't know even if you've been working—you never brought home a bus conductor's uniform."

"Deborah, you *fool*! Don't you think—"

"Oh, *that's* true! I am a fool." Ever since he came back, I'd been calm. I mustn't let emotion squeeze through.

He took my hand and kissed the fingers. "I know how you must feel. You think you've been played for a sucker. Well, you have—though it was never planned from the start like you think. At least not by me. But I admit all the rest, and I ought to be *licked* round London." He took my chin gently and looked at me with his clear eyes. "O.K. *Accepted*. You don't know what to believe. I've lied to you about so many things. All right, I wasn't a bus conductor. But I *did* take the other jobs. And I *did* go to a solicitor because I *did* want to divorce Lorne and marry you. That's for real. You must see that's for real."

I did not speak, and he pushed my hair back from my forehead.

"You say you can't believe anything I've told you. But you can believe your own eyes, can't you? And your feelings. You can understand I've had the urge to paint ever since I was so high. Nobody believed in me until I met Jack Foil. Then *you* did. When you came back to me after that first row, I was ready to throw everything else over. You gave me that glimmer of hope that I'd be able to do something with my painting. With your faith I was ready for anything. If I could have kept that *hope* I'd have thumbed my nose at Jack and Ted, but your two friends in the West End tore my painting to strips! It tore me to strips too!"

"Yes, I know that."

"You spent that night with me—half out of sympathy maybe. Did I seem like a practiced seducer? To tell the truth, I've always been a bit scared of women. Then we went to Spain."

"At Jack Foil's suggestion."

"Because he suggested it, it doesn't make what happened untrue. If I was playacting while I was there, I wouldn't need to paint for a living: I'd be a Laurence Olivier. Then we came back and you came to live here. And I was a sort of split personality, because I was following along a road that would lead to us going for Whittington's, with your help. But it was for *us*."

The fire was bright now, warming us. "Nothing makes any sense anymore," I said.

"Some things do." He put his hand on my shoulder, he kissed me. I pulled away.

"No, Leigh."

"Yes, love. Because there can't be any lies in this. If this doesn't answer your doubts, then there isn't any answer."

"But don't you see—" I said.

"What?" he said, and stopped me from speaking.

I wanted to say that that couldn't be an answer, but just as before, there was this lack of contact, of merging of spirit. And after all the stress, the heartbreak, the anger, the vile coldness of betrayal, we made love.

He lay for a long time with his curly head on my shoulder. Sleep—so inappropriate, but so welcome—was coming on us both like a gentle death, creeping into the limbs quietly, stealing away the hideous tautness of the day. The mind relaxed its grip. *They are not long, the weeping and the laughter, love and desire and hate . . .* Sleep. Quiet oblivion.

## CHAPTER XVIII

MORNING LIGHT. He was bending over me. "I got you a cup of coffee, love. It's eight—we'd best be stirring."

Morning light and pain. I got up, bathed, heard him whistling as he made breakfast. On top of the world. No remorse. All forgiven and forgotten. Everything would be all right in the end.

But what was "all right" to him? Marriage to me? Setting up in

business, with me? Was this his aim? How far had it been the bait? He was in love with me, he said. But the idea had been implanted in him by Foil. Was marriage *my* aim now?

We sat in the kitchen, eating toast and marmalade and drinking coffee like a homely married couple. He chatted cheerfully, but there was a wariness. He avoided last night's subject as one avoids changing the dressing on a wound. Let it heal a little.

He said he'd drive me to work. What time would I be through? About one, I expected. Then I'll meet you. No, I promised to see Sarah. How about driving over to see the shop? No, let's leave it till tomorrow.

"Then how about this evening? Shall I pick you up at Sarah's at six thirty? I'll get tickets for a show. We can have a slap-up dinner first."

Perhaps we could do that, I said.

I put on my coat and went out to feed the swans. They came quickly, strong feet paddling. Leigh came out with me and stood watching, an arm on my shoulder. A string of barges was in mid-stream, moving silently with the tide. A streak of blue in the sky was clouding over. Smell of the river, fresh and cold.

We turned to go in. He had never mentioned the broken drawer, though by now he must have seen it. We went out to the car. I slipped a bit as I got in and he came quickly round to see if I'd hurt myself. No. All was well.

All was well. Before switching on the ignition he turned and looked at me. "You are marvelous, Deborah. Gosh, you've changed since I first met you! Does anybody else ever tell you how much you've changed?"

"Sometimes."

"Perhaps they don't all know as much as me."

"Maybe not."

He put the car in gear and we moved off. "I think of how you were when we first met. You were *bright* enough, and *marvelously* pretty; but sort of grown in. Settled to be someone who didn't have as much fun as other people."

"Different fun."

"Yes, different fun. But it didn't need to be different, did it? Now you skate as well as me. Remember how furious you were because I tricked you into going? And the way we staggered and slid and lurched, like a couple of drunks." He laughed.

"I remember."

"You drive a car now. You swim. You dance. That's great, I think. We must do other things together. It's only an attitude of mind that stops you."

"Yes, I realize that."

We crossed Waterloo Bridge, slowing to a crawl.

"Yesterday, finding this out, you must have felt *terrible*, you must have hated my guts, you must have *hated* us all. Thank God you didn't walk out on me before I had a chance of explaining."

Into the Strand. We seldom came this way because there are better ways of avoiding the congestion.

"I can see how you felt last night. I don't think you ever really liked Jack or Ted. But it's a question of adjustment, seeing things in the round, profit-and-loss account. You've lost something, been hellish hurt; but also you've gained. I reckon if you look at it calmly you'll see you've moved out of the red, love. We've both moved out of the red."

"Literally," I said, "as well as other ways."

He laughed. "That's good. That's very good."

"Drop me in Waterloo Place. I'd like a short walk."

"You'll be late."

"It doesn't matter. Nothing matters today."

He glanced at me. "I hope you mean that in the way I want you to mean it."

"I hope I do."

We stopped opposite one of the big airline windows. There was a mirror in the back of the window and you could see our little red car, with the buses thundering past.

"Sure you wouldn't like me to meet you for lunch?"

"No, thanks."

"Then I'll pick you up at Sarah's." He put his hand on mine. "You've forgiven me for this awful thing I did? Or begun to?"



"Oh," I said, "it's that balance sheet I have to think of. All the recreational therapy you've seen me through."

He looked at me earnestly. "You *know* it wasn't that. D'you think I didn't *enjoy* it? You must be crackers if you think that."

"It's just an idea one has."

"But nothing that's happened was as *designed* as you think. Nobody's motives were clear-cut. Honestly."

• "What about love?" I said. "Is that ever clear-cut either? Isn't it a jumble of sex, hate, self-love, ambition, calculation?"

"Stop trying to work everything out, love, to see into other people's minds. We're all—groping. The only way is to make the best of things—to let life lead you along. It's the only way to make anything of it."

"Supposing it leads you wrong."

"It won't. Not with me here. You'll go on enjoying things. We'll make the big time when this money comes in."

I moved to leave, but he said, "Wait," and got out to hold my door. It was the first time he'd done this for months. He stood there as I got out, and for a second I could see the scene reflected in the mirror in the window. A small red car with a sturdy ruffle-haired, polo-sweatered young man opening the door for a pale, pretty cripple. She had a delicacy of face that showed nothing of what was going on in her mind. And her thin leg stuck out like a stick. She brushed her skirt down to hide the thin knee.

He kissed her. "I love you, Debbie. You bet your bottom dollar on that. In a way I'm *glad* you found out. Because now you know the worst about me. This thing has stuck in my crop for a long time. Now we can start afresh, on the level. And we're going places—you must believe that."

"I love you, Leigh," she said, smiling.

The window mirror reflected their brief kiss. Then she stood there, hand raised, while he got back into the car, started the engine, waved, moved out with the traffic.

Walk up to the corner of Piccadilly. The red car was disappearing round the corner into Regent Street. Turn left along Piccadilly. Shopwindows reflecting girl in green coat with scarf

and black kid gloves, dark stockings, green shoes. Stretch, click, walk on your toe; stretch, click, walk on your toe. No built-up shoe, just a bad limp that you were pretending to disguise. But who believed in the pretense? Not anybody. Certainly not Leigh.

Cars flooding. How simple to be knocked down now. But they'd not kill you if you wanted to be killed. Another broken leg would solve nothing. Safely across. Up Bond Street. Stretch, click, walk on your toe. It was ten minutes to ten. The figure was keeping me company, limping from window to window, disappearing and bobbing up again in a glass door. It was the *Doppelgänger* of German folklore, dancing attendance on me, imitating, mocking, showing me the other side of the coin.

Love, hate, truth, lies, pleasure, pain; stretch, click.

At the corner of the street where no image could mock me there was a postbox. I reached into my pocket and felt the letter. What had Leigh said? There's nothing clear-cut ever. So there is no truth but only opinions? There is no self but only impulses? I took out the letter and looked at it. Careful; not let spite, bitterness, revenge . . . But what motive, if it was not a motive of destruction? What was left but destruction?

I lifted the letter to put it in.

"Scuse me," said a voice, and a middle-aged man reached past me and put four letters into the letter box. He walked away. Tear up the letter. Drop it into some fire. Postpone a day or so, for second thoughts. But weren't second thoughts the greatest danger of all? A degeneration of mind and will so that one fell into a mental paralysis more absolute than poliomyelitis?

Balance sheet. What was integrity? Can you feel and taste it as you can feel and taste love? But what was love if the taste was gone? You were sort of grown in when I first met you. Who knows, we might plan a little holiday together, just the four of us. It's a different kind of fun, different kind of fun.

I dropped the letter. It fell on the pavement face down, and I stared at it. A middle-aged woman glanced at my leg and bent to pick up the letter, handed it to me with a smile. With a smile I thanked her and dropped the letter in the box.

WHITTINGTON'S ALMOST BACK TO NORMAL this morning. Police gone. The full staff there as usual. Furniture being brought in through the door in Bruton Yard. On Monday a sale of coins.

Maurice Mills was checking some of my classifications on the big collection of china. He agreed with all of them.

Death and hell, there was no farther to go. This was the end of the line. *They are not long, the weeping and the laughter, love and desire and hate . . .* I worked with him for half an hour, then could go on no longer, excused myself, wandered upstairs through the showrooms. I saw John Hallows, who smiled at me.

"Morning, Deborah. What's this? You're using your stick. I haven't seen you with it for months."

"This?" I looked down. "It was in the closet. No . . . I haven't used it for quite a long time."

## **"I Can't Be Expected to Sail the Atlantic..."**

*An interview with Winston Graham*

Winston Graham looks every inch an author. He is quiet, a little shy, very likable, and unmistakably British. Although he was born in Manchester, and now lives in Sussex, his roots are perhaps most firmly implanted in Cornwall. He moved there with his family at seventeen, when he first started to write. Two years later his father died, and his mother, with a small private income, offered to support her son for a year or two to see if he could establish himself as a writer.

"This brave but fash investment," as Winston Graham calls

it, certainly paid off. His impressive list of successes includes two previous Condensed Books selections (*The Sleeping Partner* and *Marnie*) and the four Poldark novels, an historical series set in Cornwall, where he continued to live until 1960. "At one time," he says, "my novels tended to be either thoughtful suspense stories, or stories concerned with characters, families and backgrounds. But gradually these two interests have merged, so that recent books have come closer to straight novels with an element of suspense."

Winston Graham is married

and has two children. I visited him in his eighteenth-century Sussex manor house and was shown into a spacious drawing room. The walls were hung with sketches of sets for the films made from his books, and with modern paintings.

"Buying paintings is one of my extravagances," he told me.



**Winston Graham**

"Journalists usually write that my interests are travel, roses, cats, fast cars, swimming, tennis and golf. It's true, of course, but I can't imagine this is the sort of exciting stuff people want to hear. And yet, just because I'm an author, I can't be expected to sail the Atlantic single-handed. My interests are centered on my work—people, places, situations. My excitement comes from exploring the backgrounds for my novels—watching a surgeon undertake a delicate eye operation, or trying to penetrate the closely guarded

secrets of a scientific research establishment."

I asked him how he had researched the background for *The Walking Stick*. How did he come to know so much, for instance, about safecracking? "Well," he said, "I was able to get in touch with the leading safecracker in London—a true professional—and he told me how safes could be broken. Then the leading lock-making company told me how safecrackers could be stopped. Then the safecracker told me how he would avoid being stopped. And so on. Incidentally, the latter may now be on the run. When I last lunched with him in London, I arranged to meet him again for a final check of the details, but when I rang the two telephone numbers he had given me nobody had ever heard of him at either."\*

Part of the novel concerns the security arrangements in a large West End auctioneer's. "These are authentic," Winston Graham told me. "I have checked with a leading security organization, with an ex-inspector from Scotland Yard, and with firms similar to the one in the book. But you'll appreciate that the precautions can't be bypassed except in the way described in the book, and I hope you're not going to reveal..."

I assured Winston Graham, master of suspense, that I was not going to spoil a moment of the reader's enjoyment.

N. D. B.